Adaptation Research Alliance

# CONSULTATIVE PROCESSES WORKSTREAM: IDENTIFYING RESEARCH NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

## ADAPTATION RESEARCH ALLIANCE

28 May 2021

Adaptation Research Alliance

Catalysing action research for high impact adaptation and resilience

UKaid
from the British people

# 1) Introduction

The Adaptation Research Alliance (ARA) is a global collaborative effort to catalyse increased investment and capacity for action-orientated 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.

Through targeted advocacy, creative cooperation and scaled resource delivery, the Alliance will ensure that the most pressing knowledge needs for adaptation and resilience actions are effectively addressed, and that measurable progress and evidence of the effectiveness of past and ongoing adaptation interventions are at hand. This includes accelerated and scaled investment in developing countries for action-orientated and user-centred research, in ways that build long-term institutional and human capacity, and help transform the research process, ensuring high quality research that has wider ownership and greater practical impact.

Following an initial consultative phase which counted heavily upon the three ARA working groups (WG 1: Governance, WG 2: Resource Mobilization, WG 3: Action Research), 6 workstreams have emerged for the next phase of ARA development.

> **ARA Workstreams**
> - Consultative processes for identifying research needs & opportunities
> - Principles & membership campaigns
> - Evidence reviews – and analytical backstopping
> - Tracking, sharing & learning
> - Co-creation space for network formation, coalition building and new programme development
> - COP-26 & UNFCCC linkages

Each workstream will be overseen by a Task Force drawn from ARA members and other key stakeholder organizations. The ARA secretariat will provide support services to ensure timely delivery as needed.

The following concept note outlines the approach for achieving the Consultative Process workstream in support of the actualising the vision of the ARA in the run up to COP26 and beyond. This document serves to provide a direction and insight as to the shape of this specific workstream, which we invite you to join and co-develop in close collaboration with the ARA secretariat.

## 2) Workstream Overview

A key mechanism for achieving the ARA aims is organizing and conducting multi-stepped consultative processes for identifying priority research and knowledge needs; opportunities for addressing them and bringing together the research and action communities in networked and collaborative efforts to identify research needs that inform, support and enable action. The consultative process should bring together a diverse range of experience across disciplines and geographic regions and stretch across the Alliance member categories: funders of science & action, to intermediaries & user groups. As barriers to action are often about behaviour, institutions or political economy, we strongly encourage the inclusion of a range of stakeholders in the consultations, including from the social sciences. This will help us better surface and respond to needs that cut across the full spectrum from research gaps (suggesting a need to generate new science) to decision-making & solutions knowledge (suggesting a need to invest more or differently in knowledge translation and use).

The Consultative Processes Workstream will surface and document Southern-based expert insights around strategic topics and approaches. By convening producers and users of applied research for development, it will enhance the legitimacy of outcomes from research, while also creating a sense of ownership over said outcomes by diverse stakeholders. In turn, these stakeholders will be able to use the outcomes for their own purposes (e.g., advocacy), thereby enhancing credibility of research within the evolving Adaptation & Resilience agenda.

Currently, the processes are intended to identify more detailed, careful elaboration of users':

- *needs* be these for knowledge, for innovation, or for learning;
- *opportunities* with regard to ways in which these needs could be addressed as well as the potential benefit to be realized from knowledge and research, potentially stated as *"IF we had or knew X, THEN we could achieve Y or adapt to Y climate change impact.*

The identification of these needs is to ensure that research activities are responding to real needs and generates (or co-produces) the most useful knowledge to inform and support action.

Overall, these consultative processes should help to address overarching questions such as: How can the research community respond to the urgent need for climate action in this decade? How to do action research, and the role of funders in catalysing it? What are the barriers to research driving climate action, and how can these be overcome?

This first round of consultative processes is also a proof-of-concept phase and is intended to inform ARA thinking and planning for subsequent consultative processes and how this activity can be best continued in the future.  We expect this Workstream to be a core, on-going activity for the ARA, fully embedded in ARA structure and operation and a key element for meeting

the goals of ARA functions #2 (planning and research cooperation) and #3 (resource mobilization). Hence, this workstream is foreseen as fundamental activity leading to a synthesis or output that itself serves as an input to stimulate for co-creation space, network formation, coalition building, proposal development, etc.

## 3) Workstream objectives

To demonstrate the feasibility and value of this process, in the lead up to COP26, the secretariat and IDRC will convene up to four parallel proof-of-concept, or pilot processes, to ground the ARA's perspective of action-oriented research within a set of thematic "Topic Areas". The key output from each process will be a written 'Chair's summary' on the insights gathered around the research needed to support action in each Topic Area.

The objectives (and associated outcomes) of the process include:

a) *Need/opportunity identification*: The process will identify the critical knowledge needs for action and options for action research and innovation to address those needs. By doing so, it will ensure that funding is targeted and addresses the right questions.

b) *Network formation*: The process will help identify relevant stakeholders from the science, policy and practice communities for the specific Topic Area that could have complementary strengths and are interested in coming together to form networks and partnerships for taking up action research to address those needs and ensure uptake of the outputs.

c) *Programme development*: We hope that the consultative process will lay the groundwork for attracting funder interest and structuring action research programmes.

The proof-of-concept pilots in each of the four initial Topic Areas will yield the following outputs:

i) Identification of distinct users, their needs, and the opportunities for action research to address them
ii) Expert insights from subject-matter experts from each consultation, and
iii) Synthesized findings ahead of the November launch of the ARA at COP26

In addition to demonstrating feasibility and value, the exercise will have two additional goals:

iv) Supporting the Adaptation Action Coalition, for which it is proposed that the ARA serve as the research and evidence underpinning and
v) Informing the on-going process of development of CLARE – a major new initiative for action research planned by the UK and Canada.

## 4) Contributions to achieving outcomes in the ARA Theory of Change

The ARA aims to launch 3-4 such processes, focused on selected Topic Areas that are aligned with COP priorities. An effort will be made to build off and leverage existing initiatives and campaigns whilst contributing to the realisation of the ARA Theory of Change.

| Outcome | Workstream contribution |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Increased profile for action-oriented research for climate adaptation | The consultative processes within specific Topic Areas will increase awareness on the critical role and potential for action-oriented research in specific contexts |
| 2. Increased funding in developing countries for action-orientated research on adaptation and resilience | The *programme development* objective is intended to lay the groundwork for attracting funder interest and structuring action research programmes |
| 3. Enhanced impact of research investments through better coordination, prioritisation and uptake | Through *network formation* aims to form networks and partnerships for taking up action research to address those needs and ensure uptake of the outputs. |
| 4. Capacity built at individual and institutional levels | n/a |
| 5. Enhanced learning and improved research uptake in implementation | n/a |
| 6. Strengthened collaboration across countries (South-South, South-North) disciplines and scales. | The multistakeholder nature of the consultative processes – across disciplines and scales – can strengthen relations and establish new network connections. |

## 5) Approach

The purpose of the consultative process is to summarize and articulate user needs, and how to address these moving forward. As the ARA seeks to mobilize and scale investment in adaptation research, we expect the consultations to inform how we collaborate and get new programs up and running. Accordingly, the "Chair's summary" on each Topic Area should be written in a neutral voice and made available to participants, ARA members and published openly for the wider adaptation community. In the near term, we anticipate the Chair's summaries will help us to deepen our value proposition by contributing to other ARA activities, including new program development or advocacy, and prepare for the launch event at COP26. More generally, we anticipate members will use the summaries as they see fit, to inform their own activities and towards co-creating new proposals. In this sense, the output of a consultative process ideally serves as an input into other ARA activities and workstreams.

A central question underpinning these consultations is: What are the barriers to action on adaptation that can be addressed through knowledge, research, innovation?? A key output shall be the Chair's summary which includes a table identifying specific users and their needs, and the barriers they face acting on research. The consultations are expected to surface experience and insights on how to overcome these barriers, and the role that the ARA could play in this regard.

| These users | … are identifying these 'knowledge to action needs' (or barriers to research driving climate action). | Consultation discussions surfaced these opportunities to overcome these barriers… | …and recommend different actors take the following actions to ensure research drives effective climate action. |
|---|---|---|---|
| e.g. forestry officials | Design protected area management plans | Understand how people utilize forest edges to optimize conservation and local adaptation | Research funders prioritize synergy among policies for land tenure and carbon sequestration |
| farmers | How to response to heat stress | Bundling heat stress warnings with existing weather information services | Action funders and intermediaries to scale successful examples |

The broad parameters and scope of the process will be set through the ARA Steering Board in collaboration with the Workstream Task Force. Specific Topic Steering Groups will be set up to oversee thematic Topic Areas. These Steering Groups will identify a lead organization / network, a "Delivery Lead", to conduct the consultative process.

Delivery Leads will have a strong base in the target sector / system / region, to ensure that the voices of beneficiaries are strongly represented through an open, transparent and inclusive process.

The first proof-of-concept round of the Consultative Processes workstream will be led by IDRC as the Workstream Task Force chair, and in close collaboration with the ARA secretariat. In this role, IDRC will convene a Workstream Task Force to ensure synergy and coherence across all the Topic Areas.

**Topic Areas for the Consultative Process Workstream proof-of-concept phase.**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Food Systems (Agriculture & food):** Research / knowledge needs for small-holder farmers (linked to the COP-26 Transforming Agricultural Innovation campaign and building on previous work by CCAFS) | **Gender & Social Inclusion:** Research / knowledge needs on the complex social factors that influence climate vulnerability and adaptive capacity |
| **Global Health:** Needs and opportunities for research to improve understanding and action on:<br><br>i) building climate resilient health systems<br><br>ii) reduction of health risks from extreme weather events (including heatwaves)<br><br>iii) reduction of climate health risks via adaptation in other sectors | **Climate Risk Assessments for National Adaptation Plans / Strategies:** Opportunities for strengthening climate risk assessment capabilities in LDCs – perhaps with a focus on specific sectors or geographies |

The specific Topic Areas for the second round of consultative processes will be based on ARA members' interest and emergent knowledge gaps. Topic Areas could include, *inter alia*:

- Resilience of the informal sector in rapidly-growing 2$^{nd}$ and 3$^{rd}$ tier cities
- Embedding effective learning in adaptation projects
- Nature-based solutions for adaptation, that are at the intersection of climate and conservation objectives, potentially in specific geographies such as watershed management, agroecology etc
- SIDS-focused efforts, potentially with links to existing programmes such as CREWS or nature-based solutions
- Research needs/opportunities to inform discussions on the tensions between quantity and quality of climate finance - in particular, how to characterize and identify transformational climate finance?
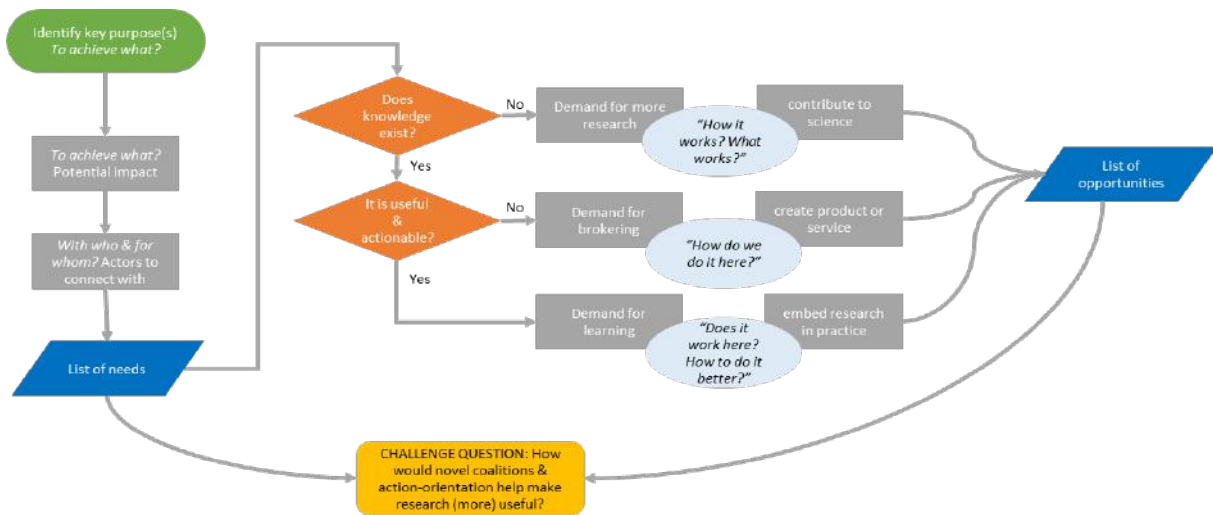
While these consultative processes could well provide inputs to and serve as the basis for the design of new action research funding programmes; all processes will be open and inclusive - and no stakeholder (including the organizations / institutions running the process) will be privileged in any way with regard to future funding if an actual funded programme did emerge. This will alleviate any concerns regarding conflict of interest.

## 6) Consultative process modalities

### a) Organisation of the consultative process

Given the ongoing limitations on travel and in-person gatherings, consultations will largely be convened as online dialogues involving approximately twenty (20) participants on each topic. Where appropriate, conveners may hold different online sessions to accommodate multiple time zones, languages, or more participants. The Delivery Lead may also opt to hold one-on-one interviews in the lead up to an online discussion to clarify expectations & gather initial views. This can be helpful to identify how to bring in the unique perspective of each participant.

Following a short welcome by the Delivery Lead, each online session can include two rounds of breakout groups and plenary. The first round would be to gather input and brainstorming, while the second round would be for deliberating and rethinking. The first round involves participants adding their experience and insights into a blank table of "users, their 'knowledge to action' needs, and opportunities for the ARA to address them" (see example below). The first plenary could offer participants a chance to highlight one key idea from each group, while conveners work to compile the input and make copies of it available to everyone. Delivery Leads can also add in previously gathered material, identified from desk research or interviews. The second round is an opportunity for participants to further expand, refine, debate, or consolidate using a copy of the gathered information.

### b) Facilitation of the consultative process

To avoid fatigue, we recommend that each online session last no more than two hours (120 minutes). Ideally the small groups will be different in each round, permitting participants to interact with more people. Each round should thus include time for participants to introduce themselves. Delivery Leads will need to ensure a facilitator is assigned to each small group. Particularly in the second round, encourage participants to think critically: to what extent do the needs speak to demand for knowledge, for action, or for learning? Challenge participants to specify the potential benefit to be realized from knowledge and research, perhaps stated as "if we had or knew X, then we could achieve Y or adapt to Z climate change impact". We do not merely expect to identify barriers to action research or potential research questions, but rather how research needs to be designed, carried out, and connected to action to ensure it has an impact.

### c) Synthesize and outputs

A written 'Chair's summary' is ideally no longer than six pages or 2500 words. It should provide a concise introduction detailing the topic addressed, date and process followed, and an overview of the participants involved (at least general description if these are not identified in an annex by name or affiliation). The Chair's summary can mention key messages that arose during the consultative process, such as common threads that weave together distinct needs and opportunities, or reflections on their nature.

The bulk of this summary will be a table that identifies distinct users, their needs, and the opportunities for action research to address them. By "opportunities" we mean for ARA members to respond in a way that catalyses action. We also expect to gather suggestions on barriers and potential ways to overcome them. These should be at a meso-level of detail, not so specific as to pertaining to a single location or organization, unless to illustrate a more general opportunity. The balance is to offer sufficient detail as to inform future research planning, yet also avoid reiterating general messages that could be crafted without consultation. The summary is not expected to rank needs or opportunities, merely decide on the most appropriate level of detail and a logical sequencing for future readers.

d) **Linkages between Workstreams**

The Consultative Processes workstream has strong linkages with several other workstreams. This may include outputs from the Consultative Processes informing other activities or other workstreams contributing to Topic Areas.

For example, the Evidence Reviews can yield useful information on the benefits of action research, an inventory of approaches and good practices or funding models and mechanisms relevant to a particular Topic Area or more generally. This input can contribute to framing the Consultative Processes and/or provide content. Similarly, the Co-Creation Space Workstream can leverage the Consultative Processes engagement and outputs to contribute to the facilitation of network formation and coalition building as well as to stimulate new programme development.

## 7) Topic Areas for pre-COP-26 proof of concept

**Topic Area: Food Systems (Agriculture & food)**

i) X consultations, convened as online dialogues, involving approximately twenty (20) participants on Food Systems (Agriculture & food)
ii) A written 'Chair's summary', including key messages.
iii) A table that identifies distinct users, their needs, and the opportunities for action research to address them

**Topic Area: Global Health**

i) X consultations, convened as online dialogues, involving approximately twenty (20) participants on Global Health
ii) A written 'Chair's summary', including key messages.
iii) A table that identifies distinct users, their needs, and the opportunities for action research to address them

**Topic Area: Gender & Social Inclusion**

i) X consultations, convened as online dialogues, involving approximately twenty (20) participants on Gender & Social Inclusion
ii) A written 'Chair's summary', including key messages.
iii) A table that identifies distinct users, their needs, and the opportunities for action research to address them

**Topic Area: Climate Risk Assessments in LDCs**

i) X consultations, convened as online dialogues, involving approximately twenty (20) participants on climate risk assessment in LDCs
ii) A written 'Chair's summary', including key messages.
iii) A table that identifies distinct users, their needs, and the opportunities for action research to address them
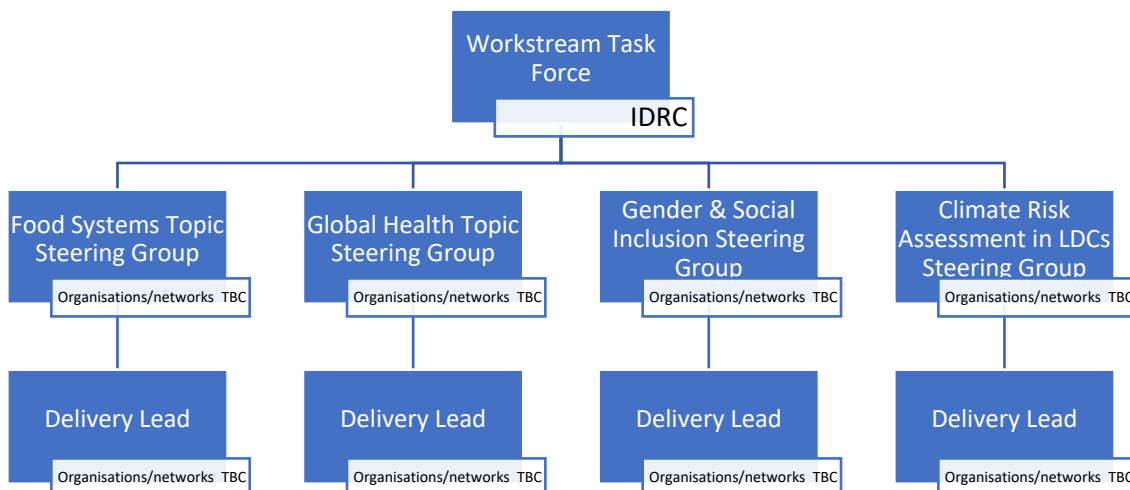
## 8) Resource requirements

The level of resource requirements for each Topic Area will vary depending on the scope of the consultative process as well as ARA members' interest in leading and/or supporting the process. As a collaborative and transparent effort, the ARA anticipate in-kind support the ensure the delivery of the pilot activities. Beyond the pilot phase, the ARA secretariat and Workstream Task Force will reach out to ARA members and other stakeholders to raise resources for this Workstream.

ARA financial resources may be made available to the organizations / networks that are being approached to run these processes in specific sectors / systems / regions / geographies, if required. In these cases the ARA secretariat shall be responsible for contracting.

## 9) Engagement Opportunties

To ensure effective transdisciplinary collaboration throughout the delivery of this Workstream the following ad-hoc opportunities are envisioned:

- Workstream Task Force, chaired by IDRC
- Four (4) Topic Steering Groups
    - Food Systems (Agriculture & food)
    - Global Health
    - Gender & Social Inclusion
    - Climate Risk Assessments in LDCs
- Four (4) Delivery Leads

## b) Workstream Task Force

The Workstream Task Force, chaired by IDRC, shall be responsible for:

- an 'overarching framework' to serve as guidance for Topic Steering Groups and the Delivery Lead who will organize and carry out consultative processes.
- identifying subject-matter experts for Topic Steering Groups.
- contribute to the sensemaking of the various outputs from the pilot Topic Areas for a presentation of findings at the ARA launch event at COP26.

## c) Topic Steering Groups

The Topic Steering Groups for each of the Topic Areas shall be responsible for:

- scoping and defining the Topic Area and providing guidance to the Delivery Lead who will organize and carry out consultative processes.
- identifying subject-matter experts for the specific Topic Area consultative process.
- contribute to the sensemaking of the various outputs from the Topic Areas consultative process to be shared with the Workstream Task Force, including contributing to and signing off the 'Chair's summary'.

## d) Delivery Lead

The Delivery Lead, guided by the Topic Steering Groups, shall be responsible for:

- organisation and convening of the Consultative Process, including a written invitation to prospective participants, introducing the topic and specifying the purpose, date, and output of the consultative process.
- facilitation of the online session and one-on-one interviews in the lead up to an online discussion as appropriate.
- facilitating the synthesis and production of the 'Chair's summary', including key messages.

## 10)   Tentative Timeline

Each Topic Steering Group will be tasked with developing the specific activities in the lead up to COP26.

| Task | Week 1 | Week 2 | Week 3 | …. | …. | …Week 16 | …. | COP 26 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Activity 1 | | | | | | | | |
| Activity 2 | | | | | | | | |
| Activity 3 | | | | | | | | |