

# ADAPTATION AT SCALE IN SEMI-ARID REGIONS

The semi-arid regions of Africa and Asia have harsh climates that are expected to intensify in the coming decades. Changing climates could amplify the vulnerability and compromise the livelihoods and wellbeing of the hundreds of millions of people living in these regions. Working with stakeholders from Botswana, India, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Namibia, and Uganda, the Adaptation at Scale in Semi-Arid Regions (ASSAR) research programme is examining the dynamics and drivers of this vulnerability, while exploring ways to promote the resilience of people, local organisations and governments. ASSAR's work is centred on 4 research themes targeting stakeholders' priorities—governance, knowledge systems, ecosystem services, and social differentiation—which enable cross-regional comparison and lesson sharing. Through these efforts ASSAR ultimately aims to promote climate adaptation policies and practices that are effective, widespread and sustained.

## Semi-arid regions and climate change

Home to hundreds of millions of people, the semi-arid regions of Africa and Asia are particularly vulnerable to climate-related impacts and risks. These climate change hot spots already experience harsh climates, adverse environmental change, and a relative lack of natural resources. People in these regions may be further marginalised by socio-economic challenges, including low levels of development, high levels of poverty, and limited participation in formal decision-making processes. Although many people in these regions already display remarkable resilience, these existing pressures are expected to increase in the coming decades.

## ASSAR's objectives

The ultimate goal of ASSAR's work is to transform climate adaptation policy and practice in semi-arid regions in ways that promote the long-term wellbeing of the most vulnerable and those with the least agency. To do this, ASSAR will use participatory research to:

- help to build a common understanding of current adaptation needs and past adaptation failings;
- help shape more effective policy frameworks; and
- promote the co-production of adaptation responses that can yield appropriate, tangible and lasting benefits.

## Key questions

1

What are the factors that have prevented climate change adaptation from being more widespread and successful?

2

Which processes - particularly in governance - can facilitate a shift from ad-hoc adaptation to large-scale adaptation?

3

What is the nature of human vulnerability to climatic impacts and other development challenges, such as poverty and food security?



**14%**

of the world's population  
lives in semi-arid regions



## Our approach

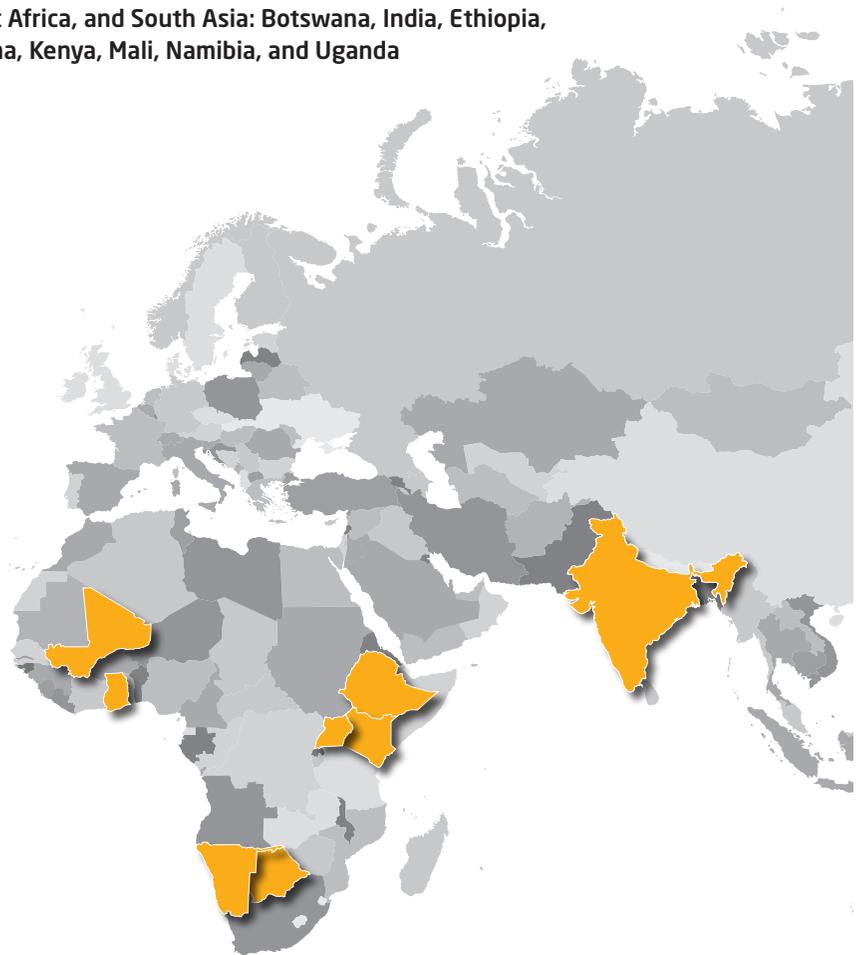
To date, most climate adaptation efforts have focused on reactive, short-term and site-specific solutions to climate-related vulnerabilities. Although important, these responses often fail to address the root causes of vulnerability, and don't result in sustainable, positive changes. ASSAR's research aims to develop a unique and systemic understanding of the processes and factors that impede adaptation and cause vulnerability to persist. In order to do this, the research is:

- multi-country, allowing for cross-regional comparison and integration of research findings;
- multi-level, spanning local communities, national and regional institutions;
- interdisciplinary; and
- gender-sensitive.

To ensure this work is valuable, relevant and impactful, during every phase of research ASSAR engages with a wide spectrum of stakeholders from communities, the private sector, civil society organisations, research institutions, governments and NGOs. Using participatory scenario planning processes, ASSAR will help to build a common understanding of current adaptation needs and past adaptation failings, while promoting the co-production of adaptation responses that yield lasting benefits.

## Where we work

**ASSAR works in 8 countries in Southern Africa, East Africa, West Africa, and South Asia: Botswana, India, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Namibia, and Uganda**



## Consortium members

University of Cape Town (South Africa)  
 University of East Anglia (United Kingdom)  
 START (USA)

Oxfam GB (United Kingdom)  
 Indian Institute for Human Settlements (India)

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