

WHAT WE HEARD: ARA PARTNER ENGAGEMENTS

During the development phase of the ARA, the Steering Board, three working groups and bilateral discussions with partners serve to advance the concept and planning of the ARA in time for the launch at COP26. This note summarises the discussions and actions taken up to the ARA soft launch held on 23 January 2021, particularly with regard to defining and developing the ARA governance structure.

During [meetings](#) of the working groups and the Steering Board in October and November 2020, consensus began to emerge on the functions, operational principles and outcomes of the ARA. These are captured in the ARA Concept Note (Annex 1) and the current Theory of Change (Annex 2). The theory of change forms the foundation for the development of options for ARA governance structure, which WG1 will consider in February.

[WG2 meetings in December](#) yielded consensus that an interactive mapping tool that identifies the actors working in this space would be a valuable contribution by the ARA. [WG3 meetings](#) delved into the question of defining action research in more detail and agreed to move forward on an academic article underlining the importance of action research.

In December, Steering Board members [agreed](#) that a soft launch of the ARA in January 2021 would be appropriate. It was agreed that a joint statement should be developed by consensus, with ARA partners obtaining organizational clearance to be associated with the statement with their organizational logos.

Subsequently, the content of the joint statement was developed iteratively via bilateral engagements with ARA partners. The final statement, known as the Adaptation Research Alliance Gobeshona Declaration, is available on the ARA website, which was launched a few days before the soft launch, in keeping with the Steering Board's approval of the communications strategy. All comments and suggestions made to the draft joint statement and the decisions made in response to them, which resulted in the final statement, are captured in Annex 3.

In keeping with [the direction](#) given by the Steering Board in January and consensus on the operational principles of Southern leadership and “thinking big” in particular, the soft launch was designed with three segments. The session outline is provided in Annex 4. First, a high-level segment in which political support by the Government of the United Kingdom and the United Nations set the expectations for a systemic and transformative ARA. Remarks for both officials were developed by ARA and reflected in Annex 5. Second, an interactive panel discussion among Southern leaders and a UNEP representative made the case for the necessity of an ambitious ARA. Third, the joint statement and next steps were presented by the ARA co-chairs.

Poorti Sapatnekar

31 January 2021



Adaptation Research Alliance

CONCEPT NOTE

9 DECEMBER 2020

As part of the UK COP26 Presidency Adaptation & Resilience campaign, the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) is working with partners to co-develop an international Adaptation Research Alliance for launch at COP26.

This global collaborative effort will seek 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.

Background and Problem Statement

Meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in a changing climate requires transformational adaptation that is driven by local needs. This must be enabled and supported by actionable knowledge – both of the risks of climate change, and of tangible solutions.

This actionable knowledge comes through a process of **action-orientated research** - an iterative process of interdisciplinary and co-produced research that creates knowledge that: is usable in practice and outcome-focussed; creates equitable partnerships between stakeholders and researchers, leads to capacity-building and enhances the resilience of those most vulnerable to current and future climate risks.

However, the current scope and scale of action-orientated research is insufficient to address the **magnitude and urgency of actions needed** across sectors. **Six key deficits** impede our efforts:

1. There is significant **under-investment** in action-orientated research that improves the understanding of climate risks and leads towards actionable, locally and contextually relevant solutions.
2. Research agendas are often **decoupled** from the needs of the most vulnerable and are not set in user-centred and action-orientated ways.
3. **Misaligned incentives** and institutional barriers often prevent the multi-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary research that is needed to effectively link knowledge and implementation.
4. There is a **lack of coherence** in investments along the chain from research through to useful application, and a **lack of coordination** and collaboration to ensure effective use of scarce funding.
5. There is insufficient emphasis on creating lasting **institutional and knowledge capacities** in the communities, regions and countries facing the greatest climate adaptation and resilience challenges.
6. Implementation efforts do not pay sufficient attention to **learning**, leading to a lack of knowledge about the benefits and effectiveness of adaptation interventions. In part this is due to the **lack of metrics** to evaluate progress on adaptation and resilience.

In short, there is inadequate concerted effort towards the research needed to build climate resilient futures. The Adaptation Research Alliance seeks to redress this situation as a matter of priority, with a particular focus on developing countries.

The Vision and Mission of the Adaptation Research Alliance

The Adaptation Research Alliance (ARA) is a coalition of institutions across the adaptation research and action communities that brings together both traditional ‘research funders’, such as science councils, and ‘action funders’, such as development donors, multilateral financial institutions, philanthropic organisations and the private sector – motivated by the shared goal of scaling investment in action-oriented research. The ARA envisions a world by 2030 in which the research community is a

highly valued partner to policymakers, practitioners and the most vulnerable communities, and engages effectively for the delivery of innovative, user-driven solutions for adaptation and resilience from the global to local levels.

The **mission** of the Adaptation Research Alliance is therefore to accelerate and scale investments in action-orientated research in developing countries, that addresses the pressing knowledge needs for adaptation and resilience of the most vulnerable, builds capacity at all stages from research to action, strengthens research–implementation linkages, and promotes greater learning.

Functions, Activities and Outcomes

The ARA will deliver on its mission by conducting activities spanning three strategic functions:

1) Advocacy: The ARA will advocate globally for greater emphasis, investment and enabling environment to support action-orientated research for adaptation and resilience from the global to local scales, by influencing and aligning the efforts of relevant actors.

2) Research planning and cooperation: The ARA will provide a forum for better research planning and cooperation, acting as a connector and an enabler for the variety of actors seeking to promote action-orientated research, target emerging priorities, and enabling partners to plan and coordinate better to achieve greater effectiveness and impact.

3) Resource mobilization and delivery: The ARA will ‘walk the talk’ by creating, operating and facilitating targeted and long-duration programmes that deliver resources for action-orientated research in developing countries. These programmes will strengthen capacity along the full chain from research to action at scale, recognising the interconnections from individuals to institutions, and the need to build capacity across a range of skills and functions, including transdisciplinary collaboration, peer learning, knowledge brokering, and access to and use of information to inform action.

The activities implemented under the three functions will lead to six **key outcomes**:

- 1) **A global multi-stakeholder coalition** co-developed by stakeholders from the South and the North to promote and catalyze action-orientated research and improve coordination and linkages for enhancing impact;
- 2) **Increased profile for action-orientated research** within the research and action communities, with improved understanding of action-orientated, user-centred research and its value;
- 3) **Increased funding in developing countries** for action-orientated research on adaptation and resilience from a diverse set of funders – including traditional research funders and action funders;
- 4) **Capacity-building** along the whole chain from research to action, at individual and institutional levels, expanding on existing schemes and building a more integrated approach to better link science, innovation and application;
- 5) **Enhanced learning** through improved research – implementation linkages;
- 6) **Strengthened collaboration** across nations (South-South, South-North), across disciplines and across scales to improve understanding of risks and promote development of locally-relevant solutions.

Taken together, the outcomes of the ARA will lead to the following **intended impacts**:

- Enabling more effective adaptation and resilience actions that reduce climate risks to achieving societal goals in both developed and developing countries, particularly for the most vulnerable people, including women and girls, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, migrants and refugees, and other marginalised groups;

- Facilitating access to climate finance for adaptation through a stronger, more tailored, evidence base that also improves our understanding of what works;
- Increasing capacity in developing countries to do and use research to develop local adaptation and resilience solutions.

From Concept to Reality: Operational principles

In carrying out its activities under each of the strategic functions, the ARA will adhere to **four operational principles**.

1. The ARA will be an **inclusive, open and transparent** coalition of countries and interested organisations. Decisions will be made in a participatory manner by the members of the alliance, and activities will be co-developed. This alliance should draw upon – and draw together – existing international organizations working in this space; scientific funding networks; major funders of adaptation etc. The exact priorities, mechanisms and commitments should be co-developed.
2. The ARA will **promote Southern leadership** through its activities and ensure that its programmes and activities empower Southern researchers and institutions, building long-term human and institutional capacity and helping address existing informational, structural and power imbalances.
3. The ARA will ensure its activities follow the mantra “**think big and think long term**”. The importance of avoiding short-termism and piecemeal approaches will therefore be an important factor shaping the nature of the ARA’s activities.
4. The ARA will champion the **promotion of gender equality and social inclusion**. The consideration of the rights of, and opportunities for, women and girls, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and migrants and refugees, among other marginalised groups, will be central in the conceptualisation and implementation of all ARA activities. These considerations will be shaped by relevant local or regional contexts.

Key milestones

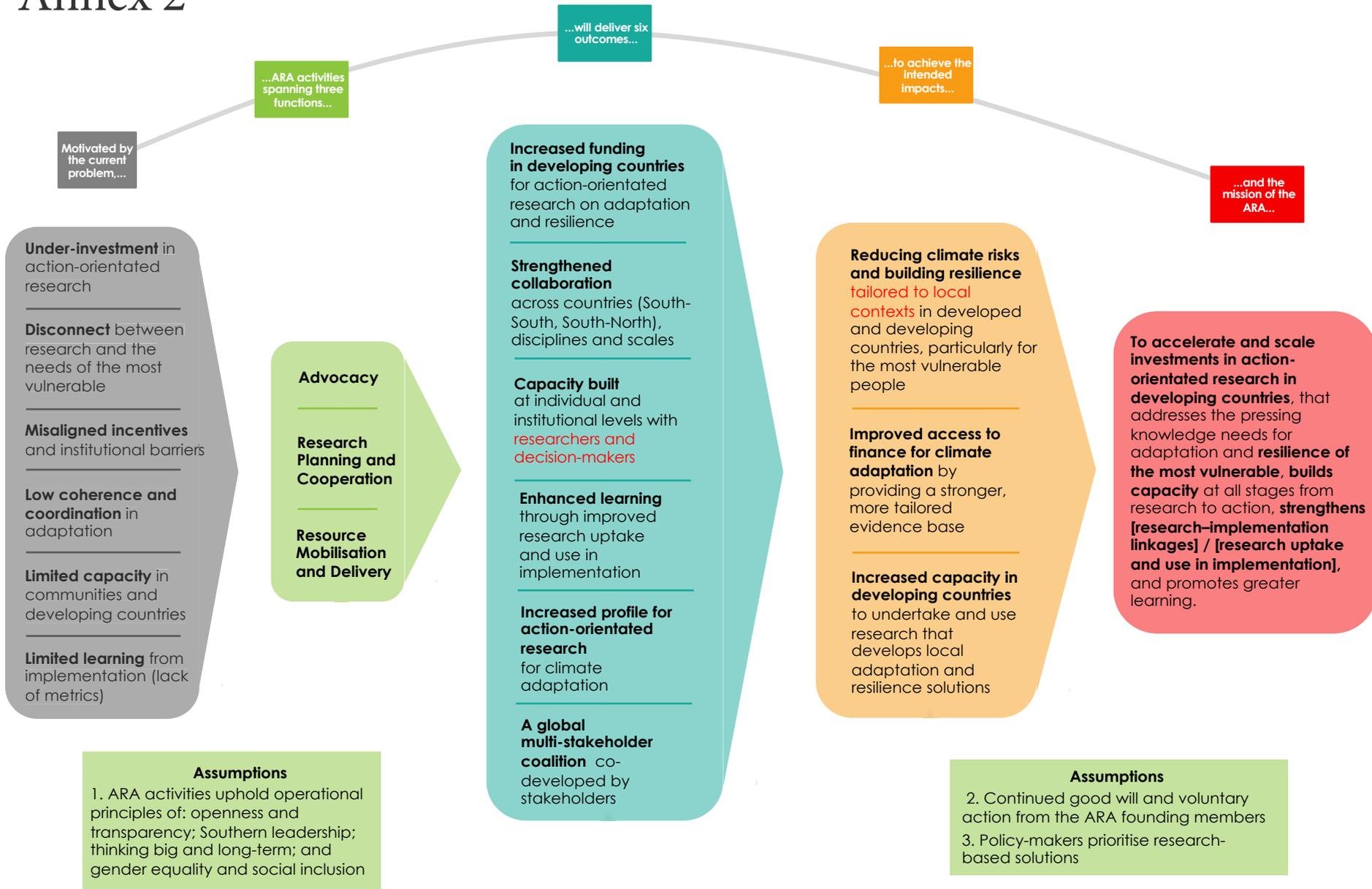
A soft launch of the ARA is planned at the Global Gobeshona Conference on Locally Led Adaptation on January 23, 2021. At this stage ARA members will be requested to endorse the ARA concept and agree to engage in the development process of the Alliance.

The Adaptation Research Alliance aims to launch formally at COP26.

The period between December 2020 and the launch at COP26 is the development phase of the ARA. This development phase will be overseen and guided by a Steering Board and supported through a combination of bilateral engagements, three working groups and commissioned analysis. The development phase will seek to confirm specific, differentiated commitments from ARA partners and define ARA governance structure and operational modalities.

Rosalind West, FCDO
Anand Patwardhan, University of Maryland
Co-chairs of ARA Steering Board

Annex 2



Name	Organization	Statement element	Comment(s)	Action taken
Ania Grobicki	Green Climate Fund	Paragraph 3, “developing countries”	<i>“the 3rd paragraph refers broadly to “developing countries”. We would like to see a special reference to the least developed countries (LDCs), small island developing states (SIDS) and African countries included if possible.”</i>	Recommendation mostly accepted; reference to LDCs and SIDS added
Saleemul Huq	ICCCAD	Paragraph 3, “developing countries”	<i>“I would like to support Ania's suggestion to include language to focus on LDCs and SIDS”</i>	Recommendation accepted; reference to LDCs and SIDS added
Vusi Ngqokomashe	Landrosa	Paragraph 2	<i>“I am happy with the inclusion of the sentence "lack of action-oriented research" in the statement, as this signifies our intention to match research with practice, activists on the ground as practitioners must be encouraged to be involved in some form of research, baseline studies must be done by smaller organisations where environmental impacts threaten most, so this sentence captures that intention well. “However I would have loved acknowledgement of the fact that adaptation research is being carried out currently in an uncoordinated nonstandardised manner and it is our intention to consolidate these various research methodologies and have an overarching framework as reference.”</i>	Recommendation accepted; The sentence has been revised to refer to refer to the demand for sufficient, coordinated and action-oriented research.
Daniel Morchain	IISD	All	<i>“I think the statement is quite good, but to me it doesn't really convey 'bold'. I think to do that we have to add some further detail about what we're aiming for, e.g.: redefine the notion of what research excellence is, what type of stakeholder needs to be an integral part of the research process (i.e. non-researchers – them having to be more than just data providers –, and policymakers), address the structural barriers blocking effective adaptation research. “I realise this is a short statement, but still, I think mentioning these concepts is important for our purpose, so that we come fwd with more substance.”</i>	Recommendation accepted; Bolder (and less academic) language inserted in paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 – referring to the scope of the problem as well as the solution ARA represents.

Name	Organization	Statement element	Comment(s)	Action taken
Daniel Morchain	IISD	Paragraph 1, “developing countries”	Re: “developing countries” in paragraph 1: <i>“Consider using instead lower income countries or Global South.”</i>	Reference to developing countries removed from this paragraph. It remains in paragraph 3, with additional reference to LDCs, SIDS and Africa. Overall, ‘developing countries’ is not an objectionable term and is well-understood. Suggest keeping as is.
Daniel Morchain	IISD	Paragraph 2, “multi-disciplinary and action-oriented manner”	<i>“Agree, but I would add a 3rd element around the need to undertake research differently: yes multi-disciplinarily and action oriented, but also (i) working more collaboratively with non-academic partners and (ii)engaging more directly with the socio-political context... so that research findings address more directly the structural barriers we talked about in the WG3 call”</i>	Recommendation accepted; Sentence amended to refer to working hand in glove with practitioners on the frontlines and grappling with the prevailing socio-political contexts
Daniel Morchain	IISD	Paragraph 3, “help translate research outputs into practical solutions”	<i>“Agree that this is important, but I don’t love the ‘linearity’ suggested by this. I mean, this could be read as: let’s continue doing research (even if a bit more multi-disciplinarily, a bit more action-oriented) and as long as, afterwards, we do the knowledge translation, then we’re fine (which of course that wouldn’t be enough). “I would suggest we highlight here that the PROCESS of undertaking research has to change, too, (see my comment above) so that the ownership of the findings is wider and therefore impact and usefulness also are increased. To change this process, not only researchers have to change, but also donors”</i>	Recommendation accepted; sentence amended to refer to transformation of research process and ensuring wider ownership and greater practical impact.
Daniel Morchain	IISD	Paragraph 4	<i>As per our conversation, I suggest we do include the word ‘structures’ or ‘systems’, e.g. “ensure that it sets targets for ambitious and realistic outcomes, WHICH ADDRESS STRUCTURAL BARRIERS THAT AT PRESENT ARE HINDERING MORE EFFECTIVE adaptation and resilience research.”</i>	Reference to systemic and structural changes has been added to sentence 2 in paragraph 4.

Name	Organization	Statement element	Comment(s)	Action taken
	European Commission	Paragraph 4, “endorsing the ARA”	The word “endorse” vis-à-vis the ARA would require full consultation with, and approval of, the member states. An alternative formulation that doesn’t imply taking a particular position with regard to an organization (the ARA) would avoid triggering this consultative process and would enable the Commission to sign on. Committing to co-develop the ARA is ok and doesn’t need such approval by the member states. Endorsing the objectives of the ARA without endorsing the ARA per se is also a way forward.	The ARA partners’ vision has been inserted in paragraph 4, and this is now what is being endorsed, rather than the ARA itself.
Chandni Singh	PlanAdapt		<i>“Regarding the ARA statement, I would like to suggest a change in the third sentence of the second paragraph: “Without a significantly increased and targeted effort to mobilise science in a multi-disciplinary, ...”. I suggest ARA use – and embrace – the term trans-disciplinary instead of multi-disciplinary. In my experience, and the language of CARIAA if I’m not mistaken, I believe the term “trans-disciplinary” is more representative of adaptation research principles and ambitions. The use of trans-disciplinary is a step beyond conventional research from diverse disciplines to include actors who often operate outside of the sphere of academia. Hence, this term – part of the Research for Impact approach – is critical to ensuring research impact and should be promoted by the ARA.”</i>	Recommendation accepted—“multi” has been changed to “trans”
Pilar Bueno	Universidad Nacional de Rosario, Argentina	Paragraph 3, second sentence	Replace “particularly” with “including” in reference to SIDS and LIDS	Recommendation accepted – sentence edited accordingly
Richard Klein	Stockholm Environment Institute	Paragraph 2	<i>Second para, add after “most vulnerable”: “and the spreading of risk to other countries and regions”</i>	Recommendation accepted, but with minor modifications: “and minimize the spread of risk between economies and regions”.

Name	Organization	Statement element	Comment(s)	Action taken
Richard Klein	Stockholm Environment Institute	Paragraph 3	<i>Third para, add “inclusive dialogues,” before “targeted advocacy”</i>	Not accepted—this interferes with the list of three functions.
Richard Klein	Stockholm Environment Institute	Paragraph 4	<i>Fourth para, change “engages effectively for the delivery” to “engages effectively to support the delivery”</i>	Recommendation accepted—sentence edited accordingly
Ruth Kelman	UK NERC	Paragraph 2, “the global research community is not yet sufficiently mobilised and connected to the actors on the front lines— governments, communities and marginalised people.”	<i>“This implies the fault lies with the research community, perhaps rephrase to note that the research community, govs, and communities need to work together to develop solutions?”</i>	No change made. But this is interesting and a question for the ARA co-chairs. Surely the fault does not lie with communities and marginalized people. Does the ARA want to orient more towards how the research community needs to change or does ARA want to place equal responsibility with research and policy-making communities?
Ruth Kelman	UK NERC	Paragraph 2, last sentence	<i>“This largely duplicates the text at the start of the paragraph, merge and shorten the paragraph”</i>	The duplication serves a purpose to reiterate and strengthen the message. Kept as is.
Ruth Kelman	UK NERC	Paragraph 2, last sentence	Replace “science” with “research” – because, “ <i>Science would preclude arts and humanities research which could make a significant contribution</i> ”	Recommendation accepted. Sentence edited accordingly.
Ruth Kelman	UK NERC	Paragraph 2, last sentence	Replace “..prevailing socio-political contexts” with “..prevailing socio-political and environmental contexts”	Recommendation accepted. Sentence edited accordingly.

Name	Organization	Statement element	Comment(s)	Action taken
Ruth Kelman,	UK NERC	Paragraph 3, reference to LDCs and SIDS	<i>“This may put off MICs who are facing major climate adaptation challenges and which have their own research funding which could contribute to ARA.”</i>	The change from “particularly” to “including” as recommended by Pilar resolves the issue of alienating MICs.
Ruth Kelman, Sarah Webb	UK NERC	Paragraph 3, last sentence	<p>Insert “for action-orientated and user-centred research, in ways that build both the research capability and long-term institutional and human capacity, and help transform the research process, ensuring high quality research that has wider ownership and greater practical impact</p> <p>Rationale:</p> <p><i>“Are we moving away from research in the way UKRI does research (research excellence) to capacity and implementation research. I think there is room for both in order to be successful and we need to be careful that progress can be made that is specific to each situation – this could exclude UKRI-type funders which means evidence based policy making is reduced?”</i></p> <p><i>“Note many of the MIC research funders have a stronger emphasis on research excellence than we do in many calls as they have targets to increase the quality of their research base so if the aspiration is that developing countries contribute their own funding to ARA too would be helpful to reference value of research excellence to delivering a robust evidence base and to building the research capacity of LMICs.”</i></p>	<p>“both the research capability and...” not inserted, as the existing reference to long-term institutional and human capacity surely covers research capability too.</p> <p>“ensuring high quality research” added to the sentence.</p>
Ruth Kelman	UK ERC	Paragraph 4, first sentence	Various edits to the vision statement, with the new sentence reading: “We envision a world by 2030 in which the partnership between the research community and policymakers, practitioners and the most vulnerable communities is further strengthened, and engages effectively for the delivery of innovative, user-driven solutions for adaptation and resilience from the global to local levels.”	Not accepted. This is the verbatim vision statement for the ARA. Kept as is. But it relates to the question above, of whose fault it is and which constituency ARA is primarily targeting for change (If any in particular)



Adaptation Research Alliance

THE ARA: A NEW GLOBAL INITIATIVE FOR ACTION RESEARCH

SESSION OUTLINE FOR
GOBESHONA GLOBAL CONFERENCE 1

Date: 23 January 2021

Time: 13:00 – 15:00 UTC

1. Session Background

As part of the UK COP26 Presidency Adaptation & Resilience campaign, the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) is working with partners to develop an international Adaptation Research Alliance for launch at COP26. This global collaborative effort will seek 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 Adaptation Research Alliance (ARA) is currently under development by a diverse group of interested partners from across the globe. The Gobeshona Global Conference 1 taking place on 18-24 January provides the ideal opportunity for a soft launch of the ARA, at which partners will declare their intent to co-develop the ARA during 2021 before formally launching it at COP26.

In addition to the strong alignment between the Gobeshona conference and the ARA's founding purpose of turning research into action, there is also considerable overlap on other themes of the conference. For example, partners have agreed that a priority operating principle for the ARA during this development phase as well as after its formal launch at COP26 is that of Southern leadership. The ARA will ensure that its programmes and activities empower Southern researchers and institutions, building long-term human and institutional capacity and helping address existing informational, structural and power imbalances. An essential element of Southern leadership is locally-led solutions, as part of the multi-level governance needed for effective adaptation. In addition, gender equality and social inclusion is another explicit operating principle which will guide all ARA activities.

Following the soft launch at the Gobeshona Global Conference, a development phase of nine months will ensure that partners conduct the groundwork necessary for launching an ambitious, transformative and credible ARA at COP26.

2. Session Description

Occurring on 23 January 2021 at 13:00-15:00 UTC, this session will present the soft launch of the ARA as a culminating contribution of the conference, and will consist of several distinct elements. It will include ministerial level participation from the Governments of Bangladesh and the United Kingdom, which were both leads on the adaptation workstream of the UN Secretary-General's 2019 Climate Action Summit. The ARA is a consequence of this leadership, thus the high-level endorsement of both countries will set the scene and appropriately situate the ARA in the evolution of the climate adaptation landscape. In addition, a panel discussion with leading partners and champions of the ARA from the donor, research and action communities will make the case for the necessity and timeliness of the ARA. Further, a presentation of the joint statement by partners in which they declare their intention to co-develop the ARA over 2021 will form the essence of the soft launch and will act as a call to action to the audience and to the world—to join the ARA and commit to its co-development and implementation. A discussion of the development process over the course of 2021 will serve to focus the session in a practical manner.

3. Format and Draft Agenda

Welcome and Introduction to the ARA (5 mins)

Saleemul Huq

Director, International Centre for Climate Change and Development

Dr. Huq will welcome participants to the soft launch of the ARA and provide an overview of the partnership

High-level Segment (10 mins)

Remarks by H.E. Anne-Marie Trevelyan, International Champion for Adaptation and Resilience, COP26 Presidency (pre-recorded)

Followed by:

Remarks by Mr. Selwin Hart, Special Advisor to the UN Secretary-General on Climate Action (pre-recorded)

Bridging Research and Action: The Necessity of an Ambitious ARA (45 mins)

Moderated by: Bruce Currie-Alder, Programme Leader, Climate Adaptation in Africa and Asia, International Development Research Center

Panel members:

Sheela Patel, Founder and Director, Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres

Saleemul Huq, Director, International Centre for Climate Change and Development

Tim Christopherson, Head of Nature for Climate Branch, United Nations Environment Programme

Committing Together: The Road Ahead (45 mins)

Rosalind West, FCDO Climate Science Theme Lead & ARA Co-Chair

Anand Patwardhan, Professor, University of Maryland School of Public Policy & ARA Co-Chair

A film that outlines the purpose, scope and importance of the ARA will be played.

Dr West and Dr Patwardhan will present the joint statement endorsed and signed by the founding members of the ARA, in which all signatories commit to co-developing the ARA. This will be followed by a description of the development process of the ARA for the next 9 months, with a particular focus on opportunities for partners to become engaged. A Q&A session with audience members will follow, and Dr West and Dr Patwardhan will then conclude the soft launch.

4. Contingency Planning

This session has several built-in contingencies to ensure success in the face of possible technical difficulties or last-minute cancellations due to unforeseen circumstances. First, the ARA Coordination Unit will conduct test runs with all participants well in advance of the session to ensure technical compatibility. Second, the co-leadership of the ARA and the presence of several knowledgeable members in the ARA coordination unit ensures that introductory and moderating roles can be conducted by back-up staff members if needed. Finally, by pre-recording the high-level segment, the session minimises the risk of under-delivering.

Annex 5

OFFICIAL

The Adaptation Research Alliance: A New Global Initiative for Action Research (session of the Gobeshona Global Conference on Locally Led Adaptation)

23 January 2021, 12:00-14:00 GMT

Objectives:

- Provide a pre-recorded video (~5 minutes) for opening remarks.
- Endorse the Adaptation Research Alliance and encourage its co-development
- Demonstrate partnership with Bangladesh on climate adaptation

Context:

As part of the UK COP26 Presidency Adaptation & Resilience campaign, the FCDO is working with partners to develop an international Adaptation Research Alliance (ARA) for launch at COP26. This global collaborative effort will seek 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 is currently under development by a diverse group of interested partners from across the globe. The Gobeshona Global Conference 1 taking place on 18-24 January and hosted provides the ideal opportunity for a soft launch of the ARA, at which partners will declare their intent to co-develop the ARA during 2021 before formally launching it at COP26.

This session will function as the soft launch of the ARA. It will include ministerial level participation from the Governments of Bangladesh and the United Kingdom, which were both leads on the adaptation workstream of the UN Secretary-General's 2019 Climate Action Summit. The ARA is a consequence of this leadership, thus the high-level endorsement of both countries will set the scene and appropriately situate the ARA in the evolution of the climate adaptation landscape. In addition, a panel discussion with leading partners and champions of the ARA from the donor, research and action communities will make the case for the necessity and timeliness of the ARA. Further, a presentation of the joint statement by partners in which they declare their intention to co-develop the ARA over 2021 will form the essence of the soft launch and will act as a call to action to the audience and to the world—to join the ARA and commit to its co-development and implementation. A discussion of the development process over the course of 2021 will serve to focus the session in a practical manner.

Audience: Researchers and practitioners on climate adaptation from across the world.

Speakers and Format:

Moderator: Patrick Verkooijen (TBC), CEO, Global Center on Adaptation

Opening remarks:

Saleemul Huq (TBC), Director, International Centre for Climate and Development

Speakers:

H.E. Md. Shahriar Alam, State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Government of Bangladesh (TBC, pre-recorded)

H.E. Anne-Marie Trevelyan, International Champion for Adaptation and Resilience, COP26 Presidency (pre-recorded)

Sheela Patel (TBC), Founder and Director, Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres

Muhammed Musa (TBC), Executive Director of BRAC International

Inger Andersen (TBC), Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme

Rodger Voorhies (TBC), President, Global Growth & Opportunity, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundat

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Closing remarks: TBC

Speaking points

Excellencies, distinguished speakers, ladies and gentlemen,
Good morning, good afternoon and good evening.

I am delighted to join you at the first annual Gobeshona Global Conference on Locally Led Adaptation, and in support of the Adaptation Research Alliance.

And I am honoured to share the stage with his excellency Shahriar Alam, State Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Government of Bangladesh.

Let me also express my thanks and appreciation to the [Government of Bangladesh and the] International Centre for Climate Change and Development [and in particular to Dr. Saleemul Huq] for conceiving and hosting this necessary conference.

Locally led adaptation is vitally important to achieving the sustainable development goals for people and planet. Communities are at the frontlines of the climate emergency. It stands to reason that the most effective solutions are those that are tailored to and by the nuances of local contexts, that listens to the needs of local communities and brings them in to creating the solutions they need. Effective solutions will harness national and international levers of change. Not only that, decades of learning and development cooperation have taught us that local leadership is essential to accelerating and sustaining developmental gains. The global climate emergency is therefore a local development opportunity.

But we are at risk of missing this opportunity. Our current approach to adaptation is fragmented and uncoordinated. We know that the climate adaptation cycle spans many individual stages: from understanding risks and vulnerabilities to designing programmes and policies, and from implementation to monitoring, evaluation and learning. But too often, those that study and research risks and vulnerabilities are disconnected from those that fund and implement actions in response to them, and from what communities want and need. And the scale of investment in adaptation does not match the need. As a result, our adaptation efforts are often suboptimal.

In proactively bringing together researchers and practitioners, the Gobeshona conference is a laudable step towards breaking down the siloes between the research and action communities. The rich dialogue that has taken place this week is testament to the value and the absolute necessity in bridging the research-action divide.

This is why, as the UK's International Champion on Adaptation and Resilience for the COP26 Presidency, I warmly welcome the joint commitment being made today, to co-develop the Adaptation Research Alliance. As a flagship/[an important] effort [of]/[under] the COP26 Presidency, the Adaptation Research Alliance aims to create the kind of systemic change we need in the process of generating knowledge that is useful and practical on the ground. This is an essential step towards scaling up investment in action research.

The United Kingdom has long been a proponent of this approach through its bilateral cooperation as well as its multilateral efforts. Together with Bangladesh, the UK proudly led the adaptation and resilience workstream of the UN Secretary-General's Climate Action Summit in 2019. And the United Kingdom is prioritising adaptation as one of its core campaigns for a successful COP26. We see the Adaptation Research Alliance as a significant component of our adaptation campaign and believe it has the potential to lead a transformation how we do adaptation research; a transformation on which the success of climate adaptation will depend.

I am very encouraged by the ambition, enthusiasm and diversity of the Adaptation Research Alliance partners. In just a few short months, through numerous virtual meetings,

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you have planted and **grown** a promising partnership. Over the course of this year, as you nurture and **develop** the Adaptation Research Alliance into a full-fledged initiative that seeks to strengthen the research-action network through advocacy, cooperation and “walking the talk”, I would like to make one request of you.

Be bold. Partnerships are difficult by nature. If the link between research and action were easy, we would not be facing the problem we currently do. Even when we want to cooperate, we can find that our incentive structures work against our common goals. So it’s going to take an extraordinary effort to realise the ambition you have set yourselves. The real litmus test of the ARA is scaled-up investment in action research.

I also want to invite and encourage new partners to join the Adaptation Research Alliance. Countries, cities, companies, centres of research excellence, and civil society organizations. We are aiming for nothing short of systemic change. For this, we need all relevant stakeholders to join in this transformative effort.

I look forward to seeing the growth of this partnership and to officially launching it at COP26.

Thank you.

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THE ARA: A NEW GLOBAL INITIATIVE FOR ACTION RESEARCH

Remarks by Mr Selwin Hart

Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on Climate Action and Assistant Secretary-General for the Climate Action Team

Executive Office of the UN Secretary-General

Global Gobeshona Conference, 23 January 2021 13:00-15:00 UTC

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to join you today in support of the Adaptation Research Alliance.

As the Special Advisor to the UN Secretary-General on Climate Action, I am often confronted by the question: action based on what? How do we determine that one intervention is better than another?

On one level, the answer is obvious. There is no doubt that policies, programmes and interventions are more effective when they are needs-responsive, evidence-based and data-driven.

In short, action must be based on sound research.

This rhetoric has become so ubiquitous among policy-makers that it is easy to forget that reality lags behind.

The fact is, there is a big gap between those on the frontlines of climate action and the research community which can help generate the most effective, practical solutions.

This gap is especially large for adaptation, which has traditionally been underserved in climate policy.

And unfortunately, despite the rhetoric, it is not fashionable among policy-makers or researcher to focus on this divide, even when the scale of the climate emergency demands the opposite.

Now, there are many admirable efforts to bridge research and action, and gains have been made, but in a piecemeal way.



There are still systemic challenges that continue to deny practitioners and policy makers the full potential of the global research community.

We need a transformation. A paradigm shift.

If 2020 has taught us anything about this topic, it's that when faced with a major emergency, the research community delivers.

In less than a year since COVID-19 began to spread across the globe, vaccines have been developed and are being rolled out. A process that normally takes years was accelerated at an unprecedented rate by the research community.

I take great inspiration from this success.

What you are trying to do with ARA is on the same scale, but with one key difference.

For climate adaptation, our responses must necessarily be tailored to the prevailing contexts and must be responsive to the specific needs of local communities.

So we have to go one step further, and not only better harness the research apparatus, but ensure that it customises its solutions to what communities need.

This is a big task. I am certain that we can rise to the challenge.

The Adaptation Research Alliance Gobeshona Declaration is the start of the much-needed systemic transformation we need, in order to re-engineer our research system in service of climate adaptation and resilience.

I want to thank the Government of the United Kingdom and Minister Trevelyan in particular, for championing the importance of adaptation and resilience. And I want to thank the Government of Bangladesh and Dr. Saleemul Huq, Director of ICCAD, for hosting this important conference.

Two years ago, Secretary-General Guterres asked the United Kingdom and Bangladesh to lead efforts on adaptation and resilience in support of his Climate Action Summit in 2019.

We are delighted to see the ARA emerge as a consequence and I wish you the very best as you develop this partnership.

Thank you.