



## **Stocktaking in Research-into-Use: progress and thinking to date**



**2 August 2016**

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## Introduction

IDRC and DFID have undertaken an ambitious endeavour in delivering a working hypothesis, the Collaborative Adaptation Research Initiative in Africa and Asia (CARIAA), that academic research of the highest caliber can contribute to changes in policy and practice.

An outcome of the first CARIAA Annual Learning Review (ALR1), focused on RiU, was that successful RiU isn't about doing research and engagement activities in parallel but rather integrating engaging, influencing and communicating throughout the research process. In summary, the vision of successful RiU in ASSAR and CARIAA is about doing research differently.

This stocktaking paper looks at ASSAR's efforts thus far in setting up and starting to deliver a Research-into-Use (RiU) agenda: what we have and what we haven't achieved. It takes a critical, internal, look at RiU progress by the end of the project's year 2/start of year 3, it summarises and assesses the findings of the RiU survey circulated in May 2016, and it finally reflects on RiU work for the next phases of the project.

This paper and, especially, the discussion that will follow its presentation in the Annual Meeting in Ethiopia plus the other RiU sessions, should inform and help refine the strategic direction of RiU and provide ASSAR members across the regions an opportunity to contribute to it.

## What have we achieved so far?

In this section we look at two key areas that contribute to promoting RiU and assess their progress by the end of year 2/start of year 3.

In years 1 and 2 RiU has been guided by stakeholder engagement and context understanding as outlined in ASSAR's RiU Strategy<sup>1</sup>. This phase has focused on understanding the places where ASSAR is operating (mostly from local to district to national levels); mapping and analysing stakeholders' (SH) roles and possible contributions to or obstruction of ASSAR's objectives; understanding the root causes of vulnerabilities of stakeholders (including of marginalised groups) and the implications of existing power structures on populations in SARs; engaging with stakeholders, where possible through including them in processes of joint thinking - among other approaches; started to develop impact pathways (IP) at country levels and their corresponding stakeholder engagement (ShE) plans. This process has been accompanied by a number of targeted communications products and strategic + opportunistic learning and influencing activities.

Below is a non-comprehensive list of key milestones from years 1 and 2 in the two RiU categories:

## Stakeholder engagement & capacity building

- ASSAR RiU Strategy
- RiU regional workshops in all regions, which have enhanced RRTs' understanding of RiU and its role in ASSAR, and built their capacities in methodologies to embed RiU principles (e.g. participatory processes) into the research process
- SH mapping and analysis exercises in all regions, including participatory methodologies such as Net-Map
- Vulnerability & Risk Assessments (VRA) processes in Botswana and Namibia
- Transformative Scenario Planning (TSP) trainings in two regions (West and Southern Africa)
- RiU coordinators in place (except in Botswana) and starting to contribute to streamlining RRTs' efforts on RiU
- Use of participatory research methodologies included in RRP
- Courses (on climate by UCT; on gender by UEA)

## Knowledge management and communications & learning

- [Information and policy briefs](#)
- External webinars (Wellbeing; Vulnerability Assessments & Gender)
- Internal webinars (Influencing)
- [Infographics and comms products](#)
- Communities of Practice (weAdapt)
- Journal articles
- Working papers and perspective pieces

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<sup>1</sup> [ASSAR's RiU Strategy is available here.](#)

As the lists above show, both of these categories can deliver specific activities or outputs. However, the greater potential for lasting impact and systemic/behavioural change lies in how we design and socialise these processes and outputs in order to achieve our ultimate impact - i.e the less tangible aspects of our RiU work. For instance, how should a VRA exercise be followed-up?, or, Which external sources should we include in drafting policy briefs to be most strategic and impactful?, or, What are good channels to enhance the impact of a published journal article (e.g. a webinar, a presentation at a CCA conference, a talk with school children and youth, ...)?

What comes out of these 'less tangible' efforts is fundamental to our objectives, but at the same time it is often hard to pinpoint. It is therefore essential to strategically plan the socialisation of each output and be aware of the obvious and less obvious impacts it can have on, say, a specific SH, but also within our own team. Some examples of these 'softer' RiU outcomes are:

- Better understanding by academic institutions of the importance of ShE in research, as well as increased familiarity with ShE methodologies and exposure to participatory processes
- Increased appreciation by SH and researchers of the value of different types of knowledge in building a complete understanding of the issues at hand, as well as to the 'solution space'
- Appreciation by academia of the relevance of framing research such that key issues of marginalised and vulnerable groups are addressed and that it sets-up an impact pathway
- Doors of SH being increasingly more open to engage with researchers and other development actors

In sum, let's ensure we realise and value both the more obvious and the intangible aspects of what we have achieved - and keep them in our ASSAR agenda for impact, and as well keep asking ourselves whether or not we have extracted the full potential from the outputs we have produced.

## What have we not achieved so far?

There are a number of elements that we have not yet achieved in relation to RiU in ASSAR. While the RiU strategy provides overall guidance, the majority of RiU work has grown rather 'purposely organically' so far, and that has been positive. We did not start the project with a fixed agenda of what and how to achieve specific RiU goals. This is partly because ASSAR's RiU goals vary by region and country contexts, and partly because it is unrealistic and inappropriate to set such an agenda in the beginning without having first developed a proper understanding of the key SH, the needs and the (potential) opportunities at hand, as well as the capacities of RRTs.

Furthermore, not starting the project with a fixed RiU agenda, has also partly been the result of RiU being a new topic for a considerable number of ASSAR members, and therefore the first logical step to RiU was to develop an understanding of what RiU is, ahead of planning RiU work. Lastly, gaining a proper and applicable understanding of RiU - and, admittedly, gaining significant buy-in from some RRTs - has been a longer process than we had originally envisioned (for instance, we had not anticipated the need for face-to-face meetings to build a common understanding, which later materialised in the shape of Year 2 RiU regional workshops).

The development of IPs at the beginning of year 3 is starting to provide a structure for RiU strategising and should become the backbone of RiU planning.<sup>2</sup> The IPs set a course of action that will nevertheless need to be revisited regularly and be adapted to the evolving circumstances.

Notwithstanding this, below we list elements considered ‘not yet achieved’ in order to highlight the need to address them in year 3 and onwards. For the sake of clarity, the list should not be understood as necessarily implying delays in RiU work.

- **Low regional<sup>3</sup> reach:** RiU work has so far concentrated mostly on local to district to national levels. How to insert the regional element is something ASSAR is keen to discuss and align with the CARIIA programme and individual CARIIA consortia. It would be good to set up this conversation with IDRC sooner than later to develop a joint strategy and inform future workplans.
- **Insufficient proximity to key SH:** While this varies from country to country, it could be argued that in general ASSAR’s work has not yet managed to promote close working relationships with key SH - as a result of ASSAR’s work - nor promoted collaborations on a regular basis on a specific task (say, the formulation of a policy). This is not surprising considering the early stages in the trajectory of RiU work so far. Still, we should aim to develop these close relations with key SH in the remaining duration. Having said this, all regions have had “meaningful engagement (...) with key staff from a number of ministries (...) and with other research consortia”, as a survey respondent from East Africa mentioned.

It is important for us to recognise that engaging with SH is not just a matter of equity, representation or validation. If we want to generate long-lasting change, we need to connect with SH in a collaborative, genuine two-way relationship. As Corry and Jorgensen suggest, “scientific evidence in itself does not legitimate one particular set of

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that the development of Impact Pathways were first undertaken toward the end of Year 1 (Dec. 2014 - Jan. 2015) after the overall ASSAR ToC was developed. However, development was suspended as the majority of RRTs felt further clarity on the foci of the Regional Research Programmes was needed. With the RRTs in place, and the rollout of regional RiU workshops, the development of impact pathways was resumed.

<sup>3</sup> For the sake of clarity, regional is meant as transnational regions e.g. East Africa, or even bigger sub-Saharan Africa.

climate policies”<sup>4</sup> nor do findings materialise into impacts unless these findings are ‘owned’ by key SH and decision makers - through collaborative development of these findings, validation, or acknowledgment of the findings’ relevance. Indeed, let’s recognise that we need SH more than they need us!

- **RiU team set-up delayed in most regions:** Having identified by the end of year 1 the need to employ RiU coordinators in country/region in ASSAR’s African focus areas, for various reasons the recruitment process has taken an unexpectedly long time. By now, however, RiU coordinators in West Africa, East Africa and Namibia are in place; while we expect Botswana’s RiU to be appointed by August.
- **Sporadic ShE, especially multi ShE and follow-up:** While specific ShE activities have been successfully implemented and bilateral meetings with SH take place regularly in some regions, follow-up and a strategic engagement vision has not always been systematic. Also, budget allocations for these purposes at regional level have sometimes been insufficient, reflecting an inaccurate picture (of everyone, incl. Oxfam) of resource requirements ex-ante. The fact that RiU coordinators are now in place in the African regions (except in Botswana yet) should facilitate a more structured approach. This includes the ongoing development of a ShE methodology.
- **Tangible impact may seem low as of yet, but...:** Specific tangible RiU activities/results may not be abundant yet (although several have been produced in the form of information and policy briefs, journal articles, workshops and workshop reports, etc.). However, we believe there is an increasing recognition by ASSAR members of the value of the less tangible results of doing RiU work, too, such as introducing new elements to the way researchers do research and building trust with key SH. This recognition is important because the ‘soft’ RiU outcomes are a pillar of ASSAR’s impact - RiU outcomes are as much about the consortium’s internal, the individual and the organisational change in attitudes, behaviours and capacities as they are about tangible changes in more formal processes.

## How are we doing and where are people’s expectations? - Findings from survey

In May/June 2016 we circulated a survey among the RiU WG + PIs + research leads to understand how this group is feeling about RiU progress. We obtained ten replies to the survey<sup>5</sup>. The findings are reported below and the full set of answers are available [here](#).

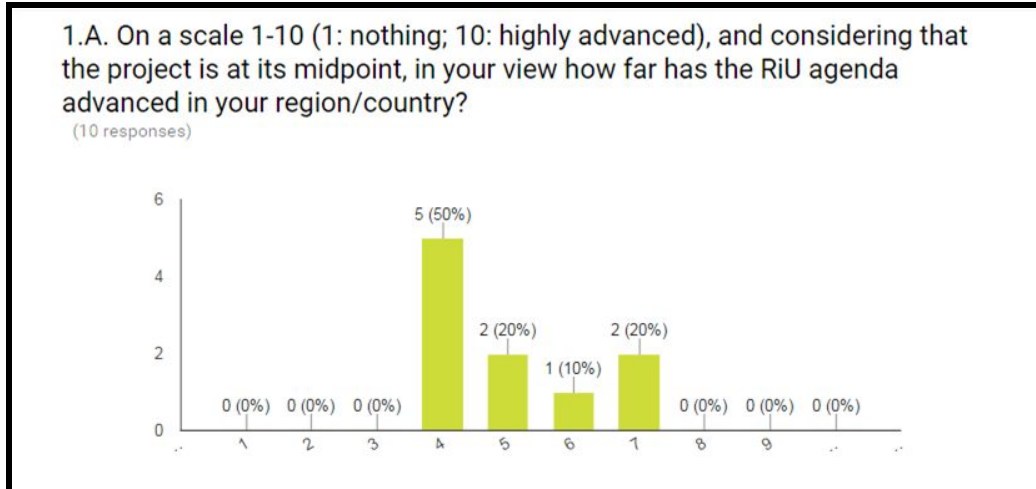
The first thing to mention about the survey, as reflected in the table below, is that respondents consider the **progress of the RiU agenda so far is at a ‘medium’ level**. There are as many

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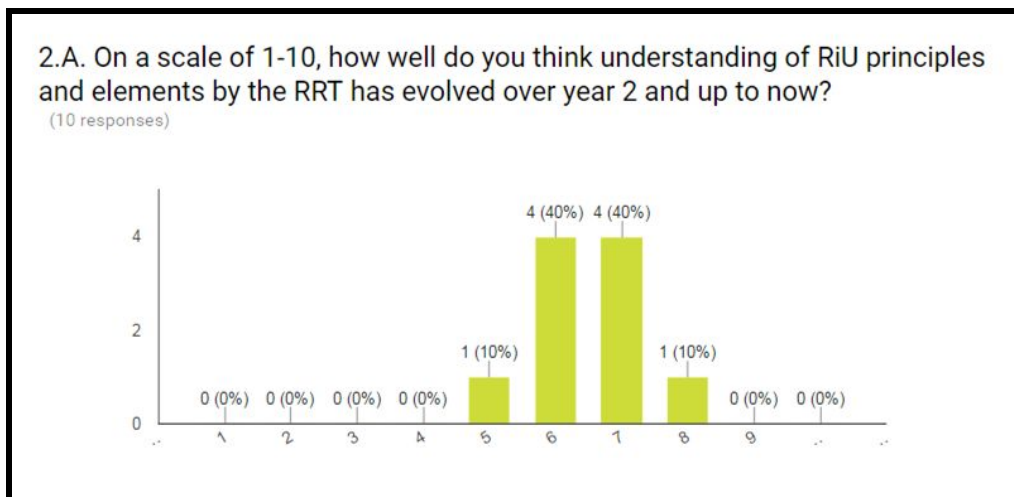
<sup>4</sup> Corry, O. and Jorgensen, D. “Beyond ‘deniers’ and ‘believers’: Towards a map of the politics of climate change” In *Global Environmental Change* May 2015 32:165-174

<sup>5</sup> The survey response from the South Asia Regional Research Team was a joint response from IIHS, ATREE and WOTR - and it was counted as a single one.

respondents indicating that RiU is “behind schedule” as those responding “on track” (no respondent indicated “ahead of schedule”). But there is a general understanding that RiU progress will pick up from year 3 onwards, or in other words, that the slow start of RiU work is ‘expected’ by its very nature (see table below).



When it comes to the **RRTs’ understanding of RiU**, the results are encouraging as respondents place it at a ‘**medium to high**’ level, especially as the work moves from concepts to its practical implementation (see table below).



On the question about the ‘**minimum impact**’ expected of ASSAR’s RiU work, one respondent summed it up clearly as “to be sure that research findings are relevant and immediately usable to inform policy and improve livelihoods”. It is important to recognise the two levels of impact reflected in this comment: on one hand addressing formal governance structures and processes as highlighted in the shape of ‘informing policy processes’, and addressing the other level of

impact in ‘improving livelihoods’, which implicitly recognises the importance of working beyond formal channels to be relevant to people in SARs and achieve impact.

Also with respect to ‘minimum impact’, the issues of not spreading ourselves too thinly and of recognising our finite resources and limited project duration came up. This is relevant because it suggests the need to set-up processes owned by non-ASSAR members that encourage and facilitate multi-stakeholder participation in decision-making and beyond 2018. Opportunistic spaces of influencing (e.g. specific input to policy or planning processes) are key elements of RiU that must be actively pursued, but it should be recognised that the combination of these with longer term influencing efforts and change in individual and organisational ways of working are equally important - if less tangible in the short term. Under ‘minimum impact’, respondents also highlighted the need to communicate findings appropriately to different audiences.

On the question about ‘**maximum impact**’ envisioned from ASSAR’s work, many of the elements listed by respondents - such as a policy that meaningfully involved actors at national and local levels; initiating behavioural change; recognition of ASSAR by stakeholders - rest on the assumption of a committed, long-lasting and productive ShE process. Respondents also mentioned the importance of coming up with ‘actual’, ‘concrete solutions’ to overcoming CCA barriers. The duality of expectations of impact in policy and practice reflects the diverse country context specific focus of the RRTs.

On the question of ‘**scale**’<sup>6</sup>, whilst recognising that the context and opportunities help determine the kind of scale to be explored, and that working in one scale by no means excludes working on the others, a majority of respondents to the survey indicated a desired focus of *Scaling Up* (impacting policies) as well as of impacting norms, beliefs and relationships (*Scaling Deep*). *Scaling Out* (impact by numbers/geographic reach) was also seen as relevant and feasible, though not the main driver of ASSAR’s work in general nor on influencing.

Respondents mentioned the need to think about ‘transforming the system’; ‘windows of opportunity’; and that policy influencing alone is insufficient partly because of the ‘disconnect between policy and implementation on the ground’. Scaling, particularly *up* and *deep*, depends largely on building trust with SHs (between SH and ASSAR and also between themselves) and building a common understanding that every SH has something to contribute in order to materialise adaptation pathways.

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<sup>6</sup> Here we consider *Scaling Out* (impact by numbers/geographic reach); *Scaling Up* (impact policies); *Scaling Deep* (impact norms, beliefs, relationships), from “Scaling Out, Scaling Up, Scaling Deep: Advancing Systemic Social Innovation and the Learning Process to Support it”, prepared for the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation and Tamarack Institute by Darcy Riddell and Michele-Lee Moore (Oct. 2015)

Riddell and Moore (2015)<sup>7</sup> stress the importance of promoting 'learning' in order to achieve scaling, and also point out that, in their empirical study, initiatives often evolved from scaling out to scaling up, or from scaling out to scaling deep.

As IPs mature and reflect the mid and longer term impact expected, the ASSAR teams will be in a position to analyse the most appropriate strategies for scaling in the different timelines. We anticipate gaining greater clarity on this during a planned rollout of regional RiU workshops on influencing. The workshops will allow teams to revisit IPs with a view toward reviewing and modifying engagement strategies with a particular focus on influencing.

In terms of **factors slowing down RiU** work the common issues that came up were insufficient human resources, not enough time, and the complexity of the project. On the other hand, **factors promoting RiU** included growing and supportive RiU teams in country/regions and enthusiasm + engagement with SHs.

Looking ahead to year 3, country/regional teams are hoping to develop relevant IPs that can unify the teams behind a common RiU agenda. **TSP** processes are high on this agenda in all regions, with high expectations attached to them. RRTs, likewise, recognise the importance of keeping an updated understanding of the ever-shifting SH landscape.

## Reflections & recommendations

This section is divided into two: First we look at reflections & recommendations that are pertinent to structural issues of RiU work; and, secondly, others related to operational issues, and the bigger picture of ASSAR's RiU work.

But before delving into these issues, let us be reminded of the results of the *word cloud* resulting from the 3-day Annual Learning Review 2 (ALR2) hosted by IDRC and comprising members of all four CARIIA consortia, in the Netherlands in May 2016. As the [image](#) below shows, **RiU** is, arguably, the most relevant word together with **Learning** (and Migration). **Engagement**, **Communication** and **Impact** (and Gender and Water) are also prominent. *There's our mandate!*

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<sup>7</sup> Darcy Riddell and Michele-Lee Moore (2015) "Scaling Out, Scaling Up, Scaling Deep: Advancing Systemic Social Innovation and the Learning Process to Support it", prepared for the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation and Tamarack Institute



bridges for SH with different aims to collaborate between them?, do SH know who ASSAR is and have they/are they likely to contact us to discuss CCA?, for instance.

3. **Scaling our objectives will take many forms.** As our name suggests, our very existence is about propagating the values behind our processes and our research findings into CCA policy and practice, with the aim of supporting adaptation and people’s wellbeing in SARs. This task will require us (all of us!) to do our ‘old everyday’s job’ in new, different ways, and hence some adjustments are necessary. Susanne Moser’s appeal - “science has to go beyond what it has done”<sup>8</sup> - can inspire us to shift into that mindset, where researchers’ jobs extend to thinking about the impact of their work on the ground and actively pursuing to change the way societies think about and address climate change and its impacts. In our own ASSAR Theory of Change we claimed that “the focus of ASSAR is not research for science’s sake; it is research for impact”<sup>9</sup>. This assertion should stay very close to our hearts in our everyday’s work. Respondents to our survey recognised the need to think about scaling very broadly, and the fact that there is no single way to do it. When thinking about scaling, the table below helps explore options and strategies.

**Table 1. Types of “scaling” and their main strategies**

	<b>Description</b>	<b>Main Strategies</b>
<b>Scaling Out:</b>	<i>Impacting greater numbers.</i> Based on the recognition that many good ideas or initiatives never spread or achieve widespread impact.	<b>Deliberate replication:</b> Replicating or spreading programs geographically and to greater numbers <b>Spreading principles:</b> Disseminate principles, with adaptation to new contexts via co-generation of knowledge
<b>Scaling Up:</b>	<i>Impacting law and policy.</i> Based on the recognition that the roots of social problems transcend particular places, and innovative approaches must be codified in law, policy and institutions.	<b>Policy or legal change efforts:</b> New policy development, partnering, advocacy to advance legal change and redirect institutional resources.
<b>Scaling Deep:</b>	<i>Impacting cultural roots.</i> Based on the recognition that culture plays a powerful role in shifting problem-domains, and change must be deeply rooted in people, relationships, communities and cultures.	<b>Spreading big cultural ideas</b> and using stories to shift norms and beliefs <b>Investing in transformative learning</b> and communities of practice
<b>Cross-cutting strategies for scaling:</b>	<i>Cross-cutting strategies</i> were those approaches all participants reported using to scale their initiatives, and were not specifically associated with scaling out, up, or deep.	<b>Making scale a conscious choice</b> <b>Analyzing root causes and clarifying purpose</b> <b>Building networks and partnerships</b> <b>Seeking new resources</b> <b>Commitment to evaluation</b>

Source: “Scaling Out, Scaling Up, Scaling Deep: Advancing Systemic Social Innovation and the Learning Process to Support it”, prepared for the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation and Tamarack Institute by Darcy Riddell and Michele-Lee Moore (Oct. 2015)

<sup>8</sup> Talk by Susanne Moser during a webinar hosted by Future Earth on 22 June 2016 titled “The Social Challenge of 1.5°C”.

<sup>9</sup> ASSAR’s Theory of Change video, available at <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B6-ATuVdtUATQ3JKMDNfSGpDXzA>

4. **In a world of vested interests and power imbalances, setting up successful CCA pathways for vulnerable groups will rely on influencing.** In addition to the sound research findings we aim to produce, working in a structured, strategic way with a wide range of SH throughout the process will be fundamental to the project's success, especially as not all pathways to adaptation will be win-wins; i.e. there will be instances of a zero-sum game, at least in the short term. Having said this, it is crucial to instill in SH the need to foster "novel relationships between state, market and societal actors that challenge and rework political, economic and social structures"<sup>10</sup> as a way to approach CCA pathways. Getting to this stage is one of our influencing objectives, and is founded on our RiU approach: designing and implementing evidence-based IPs, and regularly revisiting them. (IPs ideally encompass and condense the findings from several research and participatory processes).

A first step toward successful scaling is recognising internally that influencing will take different forms and that all may be relevant. 'Influencing' stakeholders - or, similarly, 'building ownership' of stakeholders - has been needed at the designing and refining stage of the research (years 1 and 2 of ASSAR), through to SH participation in the development of the research (years 2-4) and in the process of turning research findings and recommendations into action (year 5 and onwards - though it starts earlier in the less tangible forms discussed). Each RRT's work on SH mapping & analysis, participatory processes of analysis, focus group discussions, etc, and of course the upcoming TSPs, all push in this direction. The further development of IPs and a regular re-visitation and update of SH analysis will inform the key phase of influencing SH as research findings become available and proposals are made by ASSAR on issues re policy and practice.

Another aspect of influencing that is equally relevant is the internal one. This refers to ASSAR researchers introducing new (RiU) elements in the design and implementation of their work; these very researchers influencing other academics within and beyond their institutions to do the same; and it also means ASSAR development practitioners taking from this experience a lesson about robustness and research methods in the work we do, and in turn influencing the development sector in this direction.

Influencing, then, is not just about naming and shaming the government to move in one direction, and it is also not just about informing policy. It is also, and critically so, about changing behaviours. We do want to influence formal processes and institutions as a result of our work in ASSAR, but in the same manner we need to influence and build ownership of a large number of SH (including ourselves) in order to generate long-lasting systemic changes. We also need to aim to build SHs' ownership of the processes and vision we promote in ASSAR, particularly around collaborative working, planning and decision making as a pathway to equitable CCA. A foundational element of this framing

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<sup>10</sup> Slide by Melissa Leach (IDS), narrated by Susanne Moser during a webinar hosted by Future Earth on 22 June 2016 titled "The Social Challenge of 1.5°C".

is promoting partnerships between SH with wide-ranging mandates, including with mandates to access and allocate funds for adaptation and development, and, likewise, that are representative of the interests of marginalised groups. We will not have had much impact on this respect unless we strive to make these partnerships sustainable and long-lasting beyond ASSAR.

- 5. Impact pathways are facilitating a transition between RiU's framing, introductory processes and the hands-on, implementation stage of RiU.** In the development and continual update of IPs, there's three dimensions to keep in mind: let's ensure we (i) engage with formal and non-formal governance processes and with formal and informal SH groups; (ii) impact the ways of working of both external and internal (ASSAR) people and institutions, as well as the academic and development sectors represented in the ASSAR consortia; and (iii) consider different timelines of impact, ensuring that a long term vision is represented - just as ASSAR's research questions propose. Regular IP revision should be supported by updates of SH mapping and analyses.

Successfully facilitating impact often demands a process of co-creation; not least as a way to validate ideas and build ownership of SH. But despite its benefits, co-creation in ASSAR can't just be an aim of itself, and so as Armin Wiek indicates: "Actionable knowledge is still only knowledge. Co-creation must also include the creation of practical changes."<sup>11</sup> Turning co-creation processes into changes that generate impact pose two challenges that we must be aware and receptive of: (i) The humility it demands from the people traditionally seen as 'experts' to welcome various sources of knowledge; and (ii) The understanding that promoting changes in CCA policy and practice will require researchers to occupy both positive and normative spaces, or in other words, to recognise their need to play a propositional role in overcoming adaptation challenges.

- 6. The TSP is here! Teams have placed high expectations on it.** This is good because TSP has been a foundational aspect of ASSAR since its design. It is important to ensure, through close collaboration with Reos, that the TSP processes are well supported and are appropriately framed within the country/region's ShE plan. Likewise, it is important to recognise the TSPs' contribution to RiU as one element of it, and continually refer back and forth to the IP and reflect on how TSP findings are contributing to it or suggesting revisions.

Second, on the more operational aspect of ongoing RiU work within ASSAR, as well as 'bigger picture' ideas:

- 1. Let's start a discussion on the timeline for the availability of findings and for socialising them.** We need to start discussing the RRTs' expectations for when key findings as well as cross-regional results and outputs will be available in order to plan the streams of RiU work that are directly related to these (and in doing so let's keep referring

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<sup>11</sup> Blog by Armin Wiek (12 May 2016) "Eight strategies for co-creation". Available at: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B9rMWHHe0gcq1MUpmVEYtMGUtbkU>

back to our logframe). It will also be important to discuss ways to socialise these with SH and have an initial brainstorming about the different types of outputs that the teams (RRTs + Oxfam/ INTASAVE) foresee.

This discussion will also allow the ASSAR team to explore the issue of influencing, as well as each institution's position on engaging in it. The anticipated timing of initial results will be a key factor in planning another round of regional RiU workshops focused on influencing, which are currently anticipated for the start of year 4.

2. **Let's assess the role of the RiU and KMC WGs.** The RiU WG has been a critical channel for enabling RRT-Oxfam and cross-RRT discussions so far. The inclusion of RiU coordinators in region/country is enabling a more direct involvement particularly of Oxfam with RRTs. Communications, meanwhile, is rightfully considered crucial in achieving impact - and the KMC WG has been a vehicle to discuss and elaborate comms options.

We think that, at this stage of the project, it would be appropriate to consider whether the RiU and KMC WGs should continue as they are, or whether any modification should be introduced for the sake of effectiveness, relevance and learning. An initial step has been made in this direction by merging regular KMC WG meetings with the RiU WG monthly meeting while continuing to hold individual KMC meetings when reviewing specific products. Let's jointly consider whether further modifications are needed. For instance, an ASSAR colleague suggests that "regional teams could act as 'critical panels' during the KMC (and to a lesser extent RiU) calls, so that each region can present its plans/ comms products/ work, and the others can provide feedback and learn in the process. I feel that we did not use this opportunity for cross-fertilisation and cross-regional learning this year."

Assessing RiU and KMC WG ways of working also presents an opportunity to reflect on the project's approach to RiU and to comms, broadly, and to discuss specifics moving forward - e.g. re comms: Which are key conferences and events in 2016 and 2017 for ASSAR to be showcased in?<sup>12</sup>, and re RiU: How well is the RiU core team (Oxfam & INTASAVE staff, RRT RiU focal points) enabling a good set-up of RiU and how can it be improved?, among others.

Furthermore, re comms, a number of people have indicated (not just in the survey, but in general conversations) that some decisions could have been more strategic and selective re the outputs themselves and their dissemination. We believe that IPs will help take more informed, targeted decisions, and we encourage RRTs and their leads to be vocal and engaged in these decisions. By the way, the comms team in INTASAVE and PMU will be temporarily under resourced for a few weeks/months, so realistically this expected boost in effort in comms will need a little while to materialise.

Finally, we may want to carefully assess the extent to which ASSAR members are or aren't truly 'learning about and doing RiU'. One of Oxfam's RiU coordinators indicated

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<sup>12</sup> For starters have a look at <http://www.transformations2017.org/>

recently that “there is a gap between researchers and RiU people and [this] needs to be coordinated in a systematic way”. The ongoing work around the RiU learning framework will surely help us approach this gap, whereas this point about ‘learning’ should also be addressed when reassessing the opportunities for improving RiU and KMC WG interactions.

3. **Learning from CARIAA-consortia RiU approaches should be pursued more.** There is great potential for each of the four CARIAA consortia to learn from one another’s approaches to RiU - as well as from IDRC’s experience. Steps have been taken in this direction with the development of the OSF proposal for the cross-CARIAA RiU Learning Framework. We would like to check if others in ASSAR agree with the authors in that there is a need for enhanced cross-CARIAA collaboration, and if so propose ways forward (e.g. possibly checking whether IDRC would like to lead and coordinate this effort).

## Addendum: What next? Thoughts after the Annual Meeting

This report was presented and discussed at ASSAR’s 3rd Annual Meeting in Ethiopia in July 2016. There was a general feeling of having made significant progress on RiU since the 2nd Annual Meeting and of a significantly better understanding of and buy-in from RRTs of what RiU is about and of doing RiU. Below is a summary of the key issues raised:

- **Impact Pathways** (IPs) are helping to ground what otherwise can at times feel like a somewhat mammoth, overwhelming, and even rather abstract task of undertaking RiU work. During the Annual Meeting RRTs made considerable and collaborative advances in their IPs. Now it is important to maintain the momentum and focus of RRTs in their IPs, which will be facilitated with the presence and leadership of RiU coordinators in the African regions (and dedicated RiU focal points within the Indian partner organisations). Two words of warning, though: IPs need to be owned by everyone in the team, not just those whose main responsibility is RiU; and gender needs to be more explicitly embedded in the IPs.
- The structure provided by IPs should support a meaningful **stakeholder engagement**, including development of targeted communications. As IPs get to the ‘activities’ level, it is crucial for RRTs to consider who, how, when and for what to interact with stakeholders. This interaction needs to be selective and relevant to stakeholders (as well as to ASSAR) and it needs to aim to ultimately build alliances between stakeholders beyond ASSAR partners and beyond ASSAR timelines (beyond 2018). Likewise, we need to continue engaging across levels of governance, and not pay less attention to local levels as we move increasingly from field work to influencing: influencing is equally important at the local level.

- There are different approaches to '**having impact**', with some people seeing one key value of ASSAR in being inserted in multilateral processes (e.g. IPCC reports and other UNFCCC papers), while others see more value in focusing on whatever *new* ASSAR can bring to the table. Sure, it is easy to say: we have to do both. But in reality different regional foci will centre on different aims, which is not contradictory nor mutually exclusive. What is perhaps important to take on is that ASSAR will have no single approach to impact (e.g. not every effort is aimed at global level recognition), and consortium members should be open to valuing others' perspectives on impact and collaborate cross-regionally as much as possible.
- **Cross-regional collaboration** was very highly valued by all after we undertook a cross-regional IP peer-review during the Annual Meeting. There were requests for more opportunities for cross-collaboration. Oxfam will consider and propose options, in addition to ongoing initiatives (e.g. the Small Opportunities Grant led by START). More cross-CARIAA collaboration is also something ASSAR members would be very keen on.
- The meeting was closed with encouraging words from CARIAA on the direction RiU is taking in ASSAR, indicating that 'not knowing how to do this is expected' and is part of CARIAA's experiment. It's time to be bold and not be afraid to fail.