



In this *Spotlight*, we highlight the many ways ASSAR research surpassed traditional results, using an adaptive process known as Research-for-Impact to measure success by its ability to change lives.

*the* ASSAR

SP  TLIGHT  
*on*

Research-for-Impact

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January 2019

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Final stakeholder feedback events, India (December 2018)

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# Spotlight Final Edition

Introduction by **Jesse DeMaria-Kinney**, OXFAM GB

## Introduction

Over the past five years, ASSAR has worked to develop a systemic understanding of the processes and factors that impede climate change adaptation and cause vulnerability in the semi-arid regions (SARs) of Botswana, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Kenya, Mali, and Namibia. Our work aimed to strengthen understanding of these issues and, as captured in our [Theory of Change](#), contribute to changes in the practice and behaviour of key stakeholders. We promoted easier and better access to resources by vulnerable and marginalised groups, and enhanced their power and agency to lessen or remove adaptation barriers. Our pursuit of these goals was guided by ASSAR’s Research-for-Impact (R4I) approach. R4I looks beyond conventional research uptake, measuring success by the impact research processes have on changing lives. The approach recognises that the research production is just as valuable as the research findings themselves. In other words, by doing research *with* people the non-academic benefits arise from both the process and outcomes of our research.

R4I looks beyond conventional research uptake, measuring success by the impact research processes have on changing lives.

## What’s in a name?

Research-for-Impact, Research Uptake, Research-into-Use or Research Impact are arguably different ways of saying the same thing. Loyal Spotlight readers like you may notice a change of terminology in this final edition. Whilst ASSAR, and the whole CARIIAA Programme, began with the term “Research-into-Use” we have been necessarily flexible in our thinking as well as our activities. The term “Research-into-Use” sounds rather linear - Research (first) - into (second) - Use (final result). Yet our experience is clearly about how non-linear dynamic research processes contribute to impact. Our Research-for-Impact processes - Planning, Stakeholder Engagement & Strategic Partnerships, Strategic Communications, Capacity Development and Influencing - go hand in hand with, and throughout, the research processes from start to finish.



## Research takes time. Social change takes even longer.

So what impact has our work actually had? Well, if we’ve done our work well we are only just beginning to see our results on the ground. While ASSAR has produced numerous high-quality academic [outputs](#), research briefs, first person testimonies on stories of change, videos and infographics, the true changes in people’s lives are ongoing. This Spotlight issue highlights many examples of our immediate work, but the longer-term changes we hope to see are still on the horizon. These changes are often in the hands of our stakeholders, partners and [ASSAR Champions](#). People are seeing the issues differently. Thinking differently. Working in new ways.

Through ASSAR’s work, we’ve put some stones in place. A strong foundation upon which we hope our work will continue to grow, shape, and spark a more resilient future. So, enjoy this final Spotlight where we highlight some of our achievements to date and remember - this is just the beginning.

## R4I Course Map







# Research for Impact in Ghana

By Prince Ansah, University of Ghana



## Targeted engagement

ASSAR's **regional diagnostic study** laid the groundwork for West Africa's research theme – agriculture intensification. ASSAR engaged stakeholders from **local and national** levels, including private and public institutions, through a series of workshops. These meetings helped validate diagnostic findings from the field study and strengthened relationships between stakeholders (including farmers, journalists, local leaders, forest officers, extension workers, policy-makers, NGO representatives and district councils) and researchers (scientific staff and students). Engaging local leaders early on built trust and enthusiasm for the research phase and paved the way for broader community engagement during research activities - a key component of the project's success.

ASSAR's Ghana team used a Transformative Scenario Planning (TSP) model to imagine the future of agriculture and food security in the Upper West region of Ghana. This **process** resulted in five proposed strategies centered around two key issues - access to water and political commitment. R4I activities were then designed around each strategy to build the capacity of target audiences and vulnerable groups according to their level of need. The following are a few examples of these activities:

## Raising climate awareness among youth

The TSP process revealed raising awareness about climate and environmental issues among youth in vulnerable communities of the Lawra and Nandom Districts is crucial to building sustainable adaptive capacity in the region. An ASSAR **Small Opportunities Grant (SOG)** was used to develop a competition for senior high schools to raise awareness about local climate and environmental challenges, and promote the development of solutions by students. The **Climate Change Adaptation Through Youth Innovation (CATYI)** competition is promoting dialogue and information exchange among students and enhancing their capacity to identify and communicate local adaptation issues.

## Online platform for information sharing

Another R4I activity took advantage of high internet usage and smartphone penetration in Ghana to creatively promote research findings. An online platform was devised to remove barriers caused by poor information dissemination channels and close knowledge gaps between researchers, extension agents and development workers. A second ASSAR SOG grant enabled a partnership with Vide Desk (a mobile application development startup) and other institutions to create a simple **Native Mobile Application**. The application serves as a knowledge hub to share ASSAR findings, receive and disseminate feedback, create profiles and share information. The team is currently using its experience to support ASSAR Namibia and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Ghana to develop similar online platforms.

Download the app [here!](#)

## Improving irrigation practices

A **Scenario Based Capacity Building (SBCB)** award helped strengthen irrigation practices for dry season farming, including access to and maintenance of irrigation inputs. **SBCB activities** promoted the establishment and strengthening of irrigation farmer groups using a Government of Ghana legislative instrument (LI 2230) for the formation of irrigation water user associations. It was the first time farmers in the region were introduced to this legislation since it was enacted in 2017. The team then won some funding through the **EU Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme** to form an **AfriAlliance** and continue this work. They've also partnered with local institutions to establish **Climate Advisory Resource Centres (CARCs)** in four locations within two districts. The CARCs will use training and instructional videos about local crops to make the **farmer advisories** (developed through the SBCB workshop) more relevant and meaningful to farmers and extension officers in the region.

## Building the capacity of local women's groups

As climatic stressors affect the most vulnerable in society, a **Grant for Local Adaptation Support (GLAS)** was used to develop **capacity building activities** for empowering vulnerable women. ASSAR developed a community-based platform for local women's self-help groups to connect them with civil society organizations and others. The platform helps strengthen support for alternative livelihoods, **financial management**, and climate literacy. Further activities are being planned to link the GLAS activities to OXFAM Ghana's System Innovation for Women's Economic Empowerment (SIWEE) project which targets local women in the same **area**.



The ASSAR R4I work in Ghana has been a great experience but also faced various challenges including difficulties related to resources and personnel turnover. Regardless of these challenges, the opportunity for researchers to be more creative/innovative and play practitioner roles became very exciting and useful. Future R4I models should encourage researchers to consider R4I a major component of their research activities from the beginning. Effective R4I can be achieved when both researchers and practitioners are made to think alike and not separately.



# Developing local capacity through Transformative Scenario Planning in Mali

By Edmond Totin, International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics

## Maximising impact

In both Ghana and Mali, research, R4I and capacity building activities have been deeply aligned and mutually reinforcing to maximise impact. This has been achieved by strengthening resilience and adaptive capacity of the most vulnerable, with strategies based on strong evidence. In Mali, the team adopted an integrated approach, from the diagnostic phase through **future scenario planning**, identification and implementation of response options, combining research and action through an active co-construction mechanism. The **regional diagnostic study** helped identify the main entry point based on evidence across scales - agricultural intensification. This theme was further documented from different angles with scenario workshops, by both researchers (project scientific staff and students) and non-scientists (farmers, journalists, local leaders, forest officers, extension workers, policy-makers, representatives of NGOs and district councils). These processes yielded a deeper understanding of vulnerabilities, key drivers and required responses, which have since been acted upon through the development of actionable strategies for enhancing adaptive capacities.

Scenario participants assessed that land degradation and water shortages were the major drivers affecting current and future food systems in Mali. Accordingly, the group designed a set of anticipated decisions, with limited undesirable consequences, for short and long-term time horizons. Participants agreed that **better control** over irrigation water and soil fertility management would reduce their vulnerability under plausible future environmental **scenarios**. A cross-exchange visit on water and soil management practices was organized for 10 scenario **participants** in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. The project also supported the construction of two small-scale water reservoirs as a pilot and promoted a range of innovative soil fertility options such as home waste recycling and organic manure. These options were selected because they are expected to create new opportunities for economic diversification, including **vegetable production**, livestock rearing and secure food for the growing population.



ASSAR participants recognized that the engagement process was useful in many ways. First, engaging both community members and policy actors, across scales, at different stages of the project created an opportunity for community members to get closer to decision makers and speak to them about their challenges. By going through the process with ASSAR, community champions are now able to **advocate** for the government's support on seed certification, facilitating access to quality seed for smallholder farmers.

At the local level, participants also acknowledged that they were able to build new networks. For instance ASSAR interventions connected women's groups to a network of strategic partners, including banks and input sellers, which granted them access to new opportunities for improving household incomes.

On the policy side, ASSAR research findings will inform Mali's national adaptation processes (NAPs). During ASSAR's final stakeholder meeting held in November 2018, one of the participants - a member of the Parliament of Mali - stated that ASSAR outcomes could greatly inform national policy on climate change. He agreed to introduce the ASSAR research team to the Parliament Council on Environmental Issues, as he expects ASSAR findings will support government efforts on strengthening the resilience of communities in Mali. He was also very supportive of the testing of small-scale water reservoirs to enhance agricultural intensification in Mali, an initiative which (as he suggested) could be expanded by the government in other regions.







# Responding to stakeholder needs in Namibia



By Bernadette Shalumbu, Desert Research Foundation of Namibia

In Namibia, as in West Africa, the strategic use of capacity building funds and a responsive and adaptive mode of engagement with key stakeholders at national and local levels helped ASSAR become a trusted partner. After continued engagement with the National Climate Change Committee (NCCC), ASSAR was asked to contribute to the gender and climate modelling sections of the fourth National Communication. The NCCC also asked ASSAR to produce a **brief** on enablers and barriers to adaptation. The brief serves as a guiding tool when submitting proposals to the Green Climate Fund (GCF), and is useful for submitting documents of national interest.

The regional government collaborated with the Desert Research Foundation of Namibia (DRFN) and the University of Namibia (UNAM) to convene the **Omusati Regional Climate Change Conference**. The conference, entitled “Water and Food Security in the face of Climate Change”, built on **Transformative Scenario Planning (TSP) findings** and sought to identify climate change project intervention areas that can be addressed through funding proposals. Proposals will be spearheaded by the Omusati Regional Council’s directorate of Development Planning with support from the UNAM, Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET), Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry (MAWF), Horticultural Producers Association and the DRFN.

Training sessions empowered the Onesi **Constituency Development Committees (CDC)** to better understand their roles and functions while increasing their understanding of climate change and how best to integrate adaptation responses into their lifestyles. A climate change adaptation community training toolkit in the local Oshiwambo language was used to strengthen understanding of local climate change impacts and enhance adaptive capacity through disaster risk management. The latter component resulted in a Vulnerability Capacity Assessment (VCA) report and Contingency Action Plan. These documents were then shared with the Office of the Prime Minister (Disaster Risk Management Directorate) as a blueprint for disaster risk reduction in the region and for integration into the Omusati Regional disaster risk management plan (currently under development).



While not initially planned, the opportunity arose to train journalists and media practitioners, helping them to be better placed and informed when reporting on climate change in Namibia. Journalists were exposed to Namibian regulations about climate change and afforded the opportunity to visit one of the SCORE (Scaling Up Community Resilience to Climate Variability and Change) **project sites** in Northern Namibia.

In rural Namibia, where radio is often the most accessible source of information, the Namibian team developed a **radio show** to share their climate change research with the wider population. This show was a novel idea in that it was fact based and featured purposefully selected presenters from the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the office of the Prime Minister. This brought in the policy and practice perspective from government which was highly valued by the listeners. UNAM intends to replicate this approach to share their own research findings, and entered into an **agreement** with the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) in September 2018.

The role of networking throughout all activities cannot be underestimated. Building relationships with stakeholders enabled the project to link key persons and institutions for inclusive decision making. Resource sharing of personnel time from the various institutions allowed additional cost savings. These efforts were central to transitioning ASSAR’s strategy objectives into real, lasting impacts for improving climate adaptation and resilience in Namibia







# Research for Impact in Botswana



By Chandapiwa Molefe, University of Botswana

## Strengthening collaboration

ASSAR has been such a wonderful experience of self-development. The research for impact (R4I) component of the project has refined the way in which I will conduct future research. In Botswana, our strongest impact has been achieved through stakeholder engagement processes. Engaging with stakeholders through the **vulnerability and risk assessment** processes and transformative scenario planning led to some of the strongest R4I achievements. **I used to think** it was a farfetched thought to get government buy-in on a research project, but through the R4I work, I realised that government does actually need researchers informing them so that they can develop appropriate and relevant policies. This became apparent when we were asked to look at the District Development Plan. In the sustainable development chapter, we were able to include a section on climate change and further highlight climate change as a cross cutting theme that must have a chapter of its own. Being part of this process as a young researcher has been very valuable. Previously, I had heard talks about dissemination at the end of a project and making research outputs open for the public. However, through the ASSAR project we were able to define our research by what stakeholders needed, not only disseminating research outputs but shaping the research itself to best meet those needs.

It is important to note though, that although the ASSAR approach is relevant and addresses issues that are readily used for policy, it takes a lot of time to implement. Five years is not enough time for a project of this magnitude, 10 years minimum is needed to achieve long lasting influence and impact. The Botswana government has been very supportive and welcoming to our work. I think they realised how relevant and engaging our work is after our Vulnerability and Risk Assessment **workshop** held in Bobirwa in November 2015.



Through the ASSAR project, we were able to define our research by what stakeholders needed, not only disseminating research outputs, but shaping the research itself to best meet those needs.



Bobirwa officials liked the VRA method and immediately saw it as a useful tool for developing District Development Plans. At the time, I was very excited (as the nature of a researcher is more work is always enjoyable) and I was eager to engage further to see how this could be implemented. I did not know, at the time, how it might work, but the opportunity was good enough for me. Working with experienced professors and practitioners elevated me to much higher levels as my thought process improved tremendously! The plan after the **Bobonong VRA workshop** was to run other VRA workshops to see whether emerging vulnerabilities would be the same. Then these would hopefully be used for the midterm review of Vision 2036.

Due to growing interest, the planned VRA workshop turned out to be a **nationwide training** of Economic Planners and District Officers from all 16 districts of Botswana. The office of the President also joined through the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO), as well as officers from the Ministry of Local Government. These officers often run vulnerability assessments at the district level and appreciated that having trained local personnel would reduce the amount of time and resources needed to conduct them. Equipping planners was a great contribution and achievement ASSAR performed nationwide in Botswana.

The VRA created multi-stakeholder dialogues and transparency. It cut across issues of interest to the stakeholders - whether they were interested in planning for climate change adaptation, developing solutions, receiving information, or learning how their livelihoods could be improved in a changing climate. The process developed a collaborative environment for developing solutions. Now, I not only **identify as a researcher** but as a policy and practice expert.





# A Research for Impact reflection from Bangalore



By Jesse DeMaria-Kinney interviewing Amir Bazaz, Indian Institute for Human Settlements

**Jesse DeMaria-Kinney:** So Amir, it's been nearly five years that the Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS) has partnered with various organisations in Africa and India to deliver rigorous research for impact. What would you say the top challenges have been?

**Amir Bazaz:** The most challenging aspect has been to stick to the ASSAR **Theory of Change** and the underlying impact pathways framework. While it is easy to get carried away with pure research objectives, it's not easy to keep looking at research processes (stakeholder engagements, participatory data collection, transformative scenario planning) and what the ultimate objectives are (i.e. delivering on impacting the lives of vulnerable populations).

Evidence building in such a dynamic system (i.e. semi-arid regions) has also been very challenging. The challenge was magnified because our intentions were not to generate evidence about something we already knew, but about things we felt were critical to deliver on climate adaptation. Thankfully, the research framework allowed us to focus on certain critical dimensions (such as the intersection of social differentiation and gender, and governance and knowledge) although abstraction of evidence to aid decision-making was difficult. Strong research processes like stakeholder consultations and engagements, strategic partnerships and capacity building (both internal and external) brought internal and external validity to our findings. I am thankful that we had a Theory of Change to check and balance our management of research outcomes.

**Jesse:** While there have been challenges ranging from partnerships to implementation, there have certainly been successes, or achievements. What stands out in your mind about your achievements over the project lifespan?

**Amir:** We're really just starting to reap the fruits of our labour but I'd like to highlight three specific cases:

Firstly, it has been very challenging to look for opportunities where research, policy and practice can be brought together. Again, the framework defined by pathways to impact pushed us to experiment with implementation. It has not been easy as we confronted multiple languages, time frames for action and varied objectives but we committed ourselves to the objectives of integration. Our collective efforts in India, such as the Watershed Organisation Trust's (WOTR) efforts around **groundwater governance and management**, the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment's (ATREE) **work on invasive species management** in protected forests, and IIHS's efforts towards **transformative scenario planning**, are a few examples of integrating research, policy and practice.

Secondly, ASSAR engagement has significantly helped to **build the capacity** of both involved institutions and external stakeholders. Structural opportunities like ASSAR's **Small Opportunities Grants** and CARIAA's Opportunities and Synergy Fund (OSF) allowed further capacity building. This was most pertinent from the practice perspective. Young researchers were immediately attuned to the idea of what we are trying to impact and how, including building the capacity of decision-makers (e.g. IIHS Policy Dialogues and other stakeholder engagements) and frontline practitioners [e.g. ASSAR's **Grant for Local Adaptation Support (GLAS)**] to recognize and respond to climate-induced challenges in their day to day operational roles as well as through long-term policy.

Finally, one of the most critical processes during ASSAR research has been an overt focus on building strategic partnerships at all levels and times of the research phase. This helped in two essential ways: it helped us refine our questions in response to immediate needs and it allowed us to develop a sustained platform through which policy influencing could be initiated and sustained.

**Jesse:** Pretty impressive for just four short years. As ASSAR is an academic research project, what would you say you've learned from ASSAR? Or perhaps, more importantly, what would you recommend to the next generation of R4I projects and research consortia?

**Amir:** Most importantly, you should have Oxfam (and Jesse) on your team!

Three main things:

- 1) It is important to build absolute clarity about the project's 'Theory of Change,' but more importantly, it is necessary to recognize pathways to impact (as guided by the theory of change). It may be useful to implement a pure research project that will generate outputs that will take a long time to materialize into outcomes but, guided by pathways to impact, research production could quickly translate into useful outcomes.
- 2) Researchers have to do everything: research, policy influencing and practice. They need to recognize that they exist in a practical world and they are best placed to translate their research into tangible outcomes.
- 3) Partnerships, partnerships and partnerships: it helps in research, helps in meaningful impact, and helps in bringing together different kinds of knowledge systems. All of it leading to a higher possibility of research translating into impact.







# En route to impact in Ethiopia



By Alemayehu Zewdie, OXFAM

## How the Participatory Scenario Analysis (PSA) opened doors to capacity development opportunities with local communities

The greatest potential for impact and engagement in Ethiopia (and Kenya) revolves around the team's work on the **Participatory Scenario Analysis (PSA)** focused on *Prosopis juliflora* in Ethiopia. Grouping community members according to age and gender enabled discussions among different perspectives. Discussions were enriched with workshops held with government officials and practitioners. A final round of workshops allowed feedback on the results of the first phase and further discussion about activities that could be undertaken. Activities aimed to address underlying issues that are heavily linked to local livelihoods and the wellbeing of the community. The outcomes of the discussions about four developed scenarios are used to inform policy makers and other relevant stakeholders, and to identify key actions to take moving forward. As there is no policy related to *Prosopis*, the national workshop will prompt the government to draft a policy on *Prosopis* management, control and use.

Discussions with the Pastoralist Directorate at the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries on *Prosopis juliflora* management, control and utilization resulted in the R4I coordinator's (Alemayehu Zewdie) invitation to join the National Task Force. Mohammed Assen and Mekonnen Adnew (key researchers at the University of Addis Ababa) gave a presentation to the Task Force on the results of phase one and phase two activities, and discussed areas for ongoing collaboration. Of particular interest is the potential to develop the PSA method for use in other locations and the opportunity to use research findings to inform the development of interventions planned under the National *Prosopis* Strategy.

The Government of Ethiopia's request for ASSAR participation on the National *Prosopis* Task Force [now known as the Pastoral and Agro-Pastoral Task Force (PAPTF)] enabled ASSAR's research findings and R4I work to feed directly into national management strategies and plans. Involvement in this platform led to collaboration, engagement, and building of new partnerships and networking opportunities. During the PSA process, the ASSAR team identified one of the gaps in the community is a lack of awareness on the management and control of *Prosopis*. Thus, with the support from START, the team organised a capacity building workshop for three days in late 2018 with theoretical and practical experiences on *Prosopis* management and control.







# ASSAR on the global stage



By Daniel Morchain, OXFAM GB

Oxfam has undertaken a number of actions to promote changes in practice and policy, while raising the visibility of ASSAR and the R4I approach at global and regional levels. Furthermore, Oxfam has sought to influence multilateral processes, bringing R4I thinking as well as ASSAR's research findings to the following fora:

- Participating in the IPCC AR6 pre-scoping meeting in April 2017 to promote its institutional thinking on becoming more inclusive, south-centered, and understanding vulnerability as a social construct.
- The UNFCCC through ongoing engagement, namely at COP 23 in Bonn, where Daniel Morchain was a panellist at a **session** organised by the IISD and the Government of Grenada on Empowerment for Inclusive Climate Action and Decision-Making. He was also a panellist at an IDRC-organised event during the Development and Climate Days.
- At the UNFCCC's annual Thematic Expert Meeting on Adaptation (TEM-A) in Bonn in May 2018, Daniel Morchain was a panellist in the session hosted by the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre on 'Adaptation planning for vulnerable communities' and contributed to the report that will inform the UNFCCC's adaptation messages at COP24.
- Oxfam co-organised a session on gender with the IDRC at the Development and Climate Days at COP24 in Poland to disseminate ASSAR's messages.

- Daniel participated at the UN Women's 62<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York, where he was invited to speak as a panelist at a session on the participation of grassroots and indigenous women in climate action organised by the Mary Robinson Foundation - Climate Justice (see this **blog** about general reflections).
- Within Oxfam, Daniel, Jesse, and Alemayehu are linking with existing Oxfam programmes to multiply ASSAR's impact through synergistic activities, such as through the IKEA Empower Youth for Work programme in Ethiopia, and by bringing our learning scenarios into a new project with Oxford University and the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD).
- Oxfam has also become actively engaged in academic and practice debates and has strengthened or established links with academic institutions, including the Universities of Reading, Wageningen, Kiel and the WRI.

Oxfam has presented the theory of change/impact pathway approach to research for development at various external events (e.g. Earthquakes without Frontiers strategy workshop, Oxfam's Resilience Symposium, a panel discussion at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Oxford University's Interdisciplinary Desert Conference). The presentations have generated significant interest in ASSAR's R4I strategy and, particularly, the use of impact pathways in a research programme. The Global Challenges Research Fund has expressed interest to run R4I workshops in various countries in the near future. To increase visibility of ASSAR's work and expertise in the R4I experience, Oxfam piloted a Guest Editorial takeover of the **Research to Action** (R2A) website for an inaugural '#R2AClimateMonth'. The takeover included an **ASSAR Guest Blog Series** and **Webinar** on the R2A website.



# ABOUT ASSAR

## WHY WE FOCUS ON SEMI-ARID REGIONS

As the global impacts of climate change become more clearly understood, so too does the need for people to effectively respond and adapt to these changes. 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 are highly dynamic systems that already experience harsh climates, adverse environmental change, and a relative paucity of natural resources. People here may be further marginalised by high levels of poverty and rapidly changing socio-economic, governance and development contexts. Although many people in these regions already display remarkable resilience, these multiple and often interlocking pressures are expected to amplify in the coming decades. Therefore, it is essential to understand how to empower people, local organisations and governments to adapt to climate change in a way that minimises vulnerability and promotes long-term resilience.



To date, most 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, nor shed light on how to proactively spur larger-scale and longer-term adaptation that has positive effects on socio-economic development. Using both research and practice to address this information shortfall, ASSAR (Adaptation in Semi-Arid Regions) seeks to produce future-focused and societally-relevant knowledge of potential pathways to wellbeing through adaptation.

## Our research framework

ASSAR's overarching research objective is to use insights from multiple-scale, interdisciplinary work to improve the understanding of the barriers, enablers and limits to effective, sustained and widespread adaptation out to the 2030s. Working in a coordinated manner across seven countries in India, East Africa, West Africa and Southern Africa, ASSAR's research is case study based and strives to integrate climatic, environmental, social and economic change. The dynamics of gender roles and relations form a particularly strong theme throughout our approach.

Each of ASSAR's teams conducts regionally-relevant research focused on specific socio-ecological risks/dynamics that relate centrally to livelihood transitions, and access, use and management of land and water resources in water-stressed environments. Focal research themes in each region are: agro-intensification in West Africa; land and water access in East and Southern Africa; and land use, land cover and livelihood changes in India.

Over its five-year lifespan (2014-2018), the cross-regional comparison and integration of research findings will enable ASSAR to develop a unique and systemic understanding of the processes and factors that impede adaptation and cause vulnerability to persist.

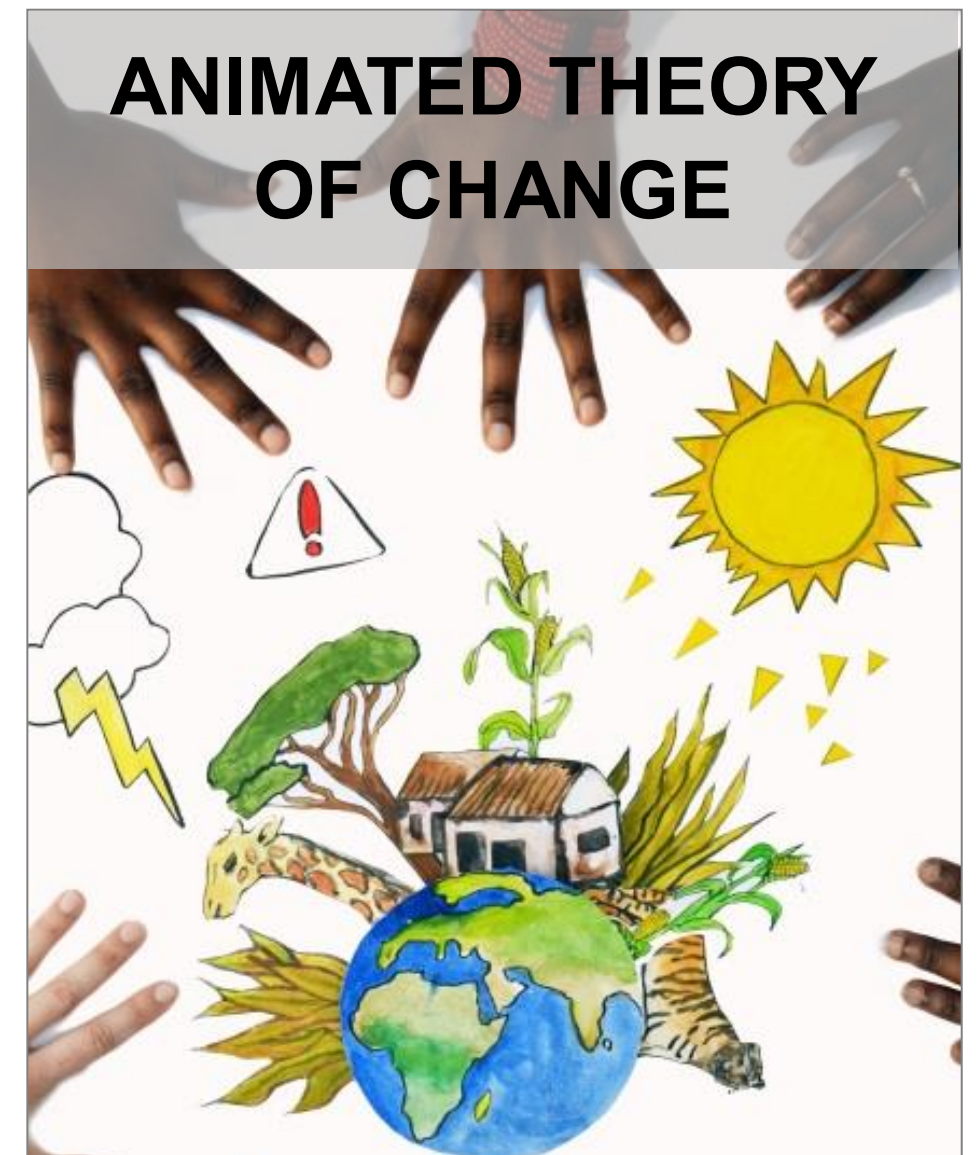
## Putting our work in practice

To ensure that project case studies are aligned with the needs and realities of those living and working in semi-arid regions, and to increase the chances that findings and recommendations are taken up, ASSAR builds relationships with a wide spectrum of stakeholders from communities, civil society organisations, research institutions, governments and non-governmental organisations.

By guiding stakeholders through participatory scenario planning processes ASSAR aims to build a common understanding of current adaptation needs and past adaptation failings, while promoting the co-production of adaptation responses that can yield appropriate, tangible and lasting benefits. By using stakeholder mapping and analysis to better understand the power dynamics of different stakeholder groups, by working with and alongside boundary organisations and the private sector, and by engaging in effective communication, capacity building and advocacy campaigns, ASSAR seeks to inform and promote sustainable development pathways that have the best prospect for enhancing the wellbeing of the most vulnerable and/or marginalised in the coming decades.

Through these activities, ASSAR will better integrate the domains of adaptation research, policy and practice. By building the adaptive capacity of primary stakeholders, policy and decision makers, practitioners, boundary organisations, and academic researchers, this integration could bring about previously inconceivable strategies for change and transformation. In time these efforts could also contribute to a change in the attitudes and behaviours of key stakeholders, prompt easier and better access to resources by vulnerable groups, and enhance the power and agency of vulnerable groups to lessen or remove adaptation barriers, and exploit adaptation enablers.

## ANIMATED THEORY OF CHANGE



Photos (L-R): Salma Hegga, Poshendra Satyal, Tali Hoffman



# ASSAR OUTPUTS

A selection of our 2018 - 2019 outputs. For more information see the [ASSAR website](#).

<b>Journal article</b> The role of formal and informal institutions in smallholder agricultural adaptation: The case of Lawra and Nandom Districts, Ghana	<b>Journal article</b> Barriers and enablers of local adaptive measures: A case study of Bengaluru's informal settlement dwellers	<b>Journal article</b> Examining vulnerability in a dynamic urban setting: The case of Bangalore's interstate migrant waste pickers	<b>Journal article</b> Perceptions of ecosystem services provision performance in the face of climate change among communities in Bobirwa sub-district, Botswana	<b>Journal article</b> The effect of inter-organisational collaboration networks on climate knowledge flows and communication to pastoralists in Kenya
<b>Journal article</b> Social differences in the vulnerability and adaptation patterns among smallholder farmers: Evidence from Lawra District in the upper west region of Ghana	<b>Book Chapter</b> Considering religion and tradition in climate smart agriculture: Insights from Namibia	<b>Book Chapter</b> Rethinking the framing of climate change adaptation: Knowledge, power, and politics	<b>Book Chapter</b> Managing the increasing heat stress in rural areas	<b>Book Chapter</b> Multi-level climate change planning: Scale, capacity and the ability for local action
<b>Book Chapter</b> Localising environmental governance in India: Mapping urban institutional structures	<b>Report</b> Considering the future of the rangelands: Participatory Scenario Analysis in Isiolo, Kenya	<b>Report</b> Considering the future of Prosopis: Participatory Scenario Analysis in Afar, Ethiopia	<b>Story of Change</b> From me to we...from mine to ours! A story of how motivation changes people's perceptions and drives community action	<b>Information Brief</b> Migration in climate change hotspots: Opportunities and challenges for adaptation
<b>Information Brief</b> Do conservancies enhance the adaptive capacity of communities? Perspectives from ASSAR's work in Kenya	<b>Information Brief</b> Women, work and adaptive capacity	<b>Information Brief</b> Does villagisation enhance the adaptive capacity of pastoralist communities? Perspectives from ASSAR's work in Ethiopia	<b>Information Brief</b> Prosopis juliflora: Impacts and management in the face of climate change in Ethiopia's Middle Awash Valley	<b>Information brief</b> When adaptation barriers and enablers intersect: Key considerations for adaptation planning drawn from ASSAR's findings
<b>Infographics</b> 1.5°C Infographics Multiscale governance: The paradox of top-down policy design	<b>Videos</b> Nature on rampage Considering the future of Prosopis: Participatory Scenario Analysis in Afar, Ethiopia	<b>Videos</b> Climate knowledge brokering in Nagaland, India Climate knowledge brokering in Rajasthan, India	<b>Video</b> Preparing for the future of agriculture and food in Ghana's Upper West region	<b>Video</b> Parcours du projet d'adaptation au changement climatique



# ASSAR PARTNERS

The international and interdisciplinary ASSAR team comprises a mix of research and practitioner organisations, and includes groups with global reach as well as those deeply embedded in their communities.

## LEAD ORGANISATIONS



## PARTNER ORGANISATIONS



## CARIAA PROGRAMME

ASSAR is one of four hot-spot research projects in the Collaborative Adaptation Research Initiative in Africa and Asia (CARIAA) programme, funded by Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID).

