



GLOBAL
RESILIENCE
PARTNERSHIP

SARA | SOUTHERN AFRICAN
RESILIENCE ACADEMY

SARA Outcome Report

2021 - 2023

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Disclaimer

The contents are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Sida, or any of the individuals and organizations referred to in the report.

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Acronyms

CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CDF	Constituency Development Fund
COP28	28th Conference of the Parties
CRAL	Climate Resilience Academy for Least Developed Countries
CST	Centre for Sustainability Transitions
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
GRAID	Guidance for Resilience in the Anthropocene: Investments for Development
GRP	Global Resilience Partnership
GTA	Gender-Transformative Approach
ICLEI	Local Governments for Sustainability
IWMI	International Water Management Institute
LDC	Least Developed Country
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
PECS	Programme on Ecosystems Change and Society
NAP	Non-Academic Product
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
S2SRA	South-to-South Resilience Academy
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAPECS	Southern African Programme on Ecosystem Change and Society
SARA	Southern African Resilience Academy
SESYNC	National Socio-Environmental Synthesis Centre
Sida	The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

Introduction to the Global Resilience Partnership's work on building resilience in the Global South



Why a southern-based collaborative and transdisciplinary programme?

Sustainability and development research confronts the immense challenges of the 21st century, aiming to ensure human well-being in economically, ecologically, and socially desirable ways. Historically, this field has been dominated by Northern-based institutions addressing problems in the Global South. However, there is a pressing need for a systemic shift towards the Global South in knowledge leadership and the global sustainability research arena. This shift must acknowledge and address geographic gaps, biases in theoretical perspectives, and historical inequities in access to scholarly and policy influence. Those living closest to these challenges are best placed to define and address them, necessitating the amplification of their voices in global sustainability and development discourse.

In response to this need, the Global Resilience Partnership (GRP) established the South-to-South Resilience Academies (S2SRAs), an innovative and ambitious programme aimed at mobilising transdisciplinary teams of academics, thought leaders, and non-academics from the Global South. The goal was to foster cutting-edge southern-based collaborations to address the most intractable resilience challenges. Through this programme, GRP aimed to lead the shift of global knowledge creation towards the Global South. The S2SRA comprised transdisciplinary collaborations designed to amplify, leverage, and coordinate leadership and expertise in the Global South, addressing the highly unequal playing field between the Global North and South.

With a predominant participation of members from Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States, the programme combined diverse forms of knowledge to generate valuable insights and illuminate

obstacles and solution pathways for the world's most challenging environmental, sustainability, and development problems. It formed part of the ultimate goal to uncover diverse worldviews on sustainability, influence future funding and activities, and promote an integrated global sustainability knowledge and solutions agenda that meets the challenge at global, regional, and local levels.

Each S2SRA was coordinated by a different lead partner, all with proven track records of acting as regional bridging partners and knowledge brokers. The GRP secretariat played a crucial role in facilitating coordination among these partners, identifying sustainability and development challenges, reviewing proposals, selecting teams for funding, and leveraging expert engagement. Close collaboration with partners ensured the dissemination of outputs, connection to policy, and guidance through expertise. Additionally, the partnership with the Stockholm Resilience Centre provided access to leading researchers on resilience and complexity for development.



The Resilience Academies:

Climate Resilience Academy for Least Developed Countries (CRAL), coordinated by the [International Centre for Climate Change and Development in Bangladesh](#).

Southern African Resilience Academy (SARA), coordinated by the [Centre for Sustainability Transitions \(CST\)](#) at Stellenbosch University in South Africa.



The Southern African Resilience Academy (SARA)

SARA emerged in response to the imperative for inclusive and contextualized knowledge co-production in Southern Africa, acknowledging the region's complex social-ecological dynamics. SARA was coordinated by CST at Stellenbosch University in South Africa for three years, starting in early 2021, as one of the GRP's S2SRA initiatives. Throughout this period, SARA received support from the GRP and regional partners such as the South African Research Chair in Social-Ecological Systems and Resilience, held by Prof Reinette (Oonsie) Biggs at CST, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Resilient Waters Programme.

SARA's primary role was to serve as a convening and support space for researchers and practitioners across Southern Africa, engaging around pressing resilience and development challenges in the region. The academy's key objectives included:

- Strengthening regional expert networks and collaboration
- Supporting the co-production of policy- and practice-relevant knowledge
- Enhancing knowledge exchange between Global South regions
- Knowledge transfer from the Global South to the Global North

Aligned with GRP's focus on knowledge, particularly in the context of building resilience in communities and countries, SARA contributed to enhancing the understanding of how to anticipate, plan, and respond to a diverse range of risks, especially relevant for LDCs. SARA's focus on knowledge synthesis also allowed the development of theoretical insights and conceptual advancement in the field of social-ecological resilience. Over its three-year course, SARA became a crucial component of the GRP's efforts to address resilience and development challenges in the Global South.



Background on the Centre for Sustainability Transitions and hosting of SARA

CST, the coordinating institution for SARA, is a flagship research initiative at Stellenbosch University in South Africa. The research and teaching centre serves as a nexus for interdisciplinary studies in transdisciplinary, complexity, sustainability, and social-ecological resilience, addressing urgent national, continental, and global sustainability and development challenges. The primary objective of CST is to co-produce transformational knowledge on the dynamics of multi-scale social-ecological change in partnership with key stakeholders, and thereby provide strategic insights into new modes of research and governance that can bring about a just transition to a more equitable and sustainable society, in Southern Africa and globally.

CST has established and proven itself as a leading international hub of thought leadership on resilience theory and practice. It also has a successful history of working on development-related research and practice projects, including the Guidance for Resilience in the Anthropocene: Investments for Development (GRAID) initiative funded by Sida, and the USAID-funded Resilient Waters Programme.

CST's extensive connections both regionally and globally allowed for efficient stakeholder engagement. Leveraging existing networks such as the Southern African Programme on Ecosystem Change and Society (SAPECS), SARA tapped into CST's successful history of working on development-related research and practice projects in the region. CST's existing online infrastructure proved useful in the dissemination of knowledge products generated by SARA through the Southern African Resilience Hub (www.reshubafrika.org), which is an online repository of resilience-related documents, webinars, and training materials. The information available on the ResHub is tailored to practitioners working in Southern Africa, with the aim of providing easily accessible and practice-oriented resilience case studies, research, and tools. To the extent possible, knowledge products such as documents and videos that were created by SARA were shared on the ResHub.

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How did the idea for SARA come together?

The establishment of SARA was informed by existing networks in Southern Africa, specifically SAPECS, which is a regional network under the global Programme on Ecosystems Change and Society (PECS). Reflection work on SAPECS's approach and scientific insights from the region emphasized the importance of long-term commitment to a particular place for meaningful action and co-learning within social-ecological systems.^{1,2} This understanding informed SARA's conceptual grounding and its establishment at the CST, leveraging the CST's expertise and networks.

Initially, SARA focused on food system transformations, aligning with global policy discussions on food security, particularly in anticipation of the UN Food Systems Summit in September 2021. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, strategic conversations around food systems took place online, laying the groundwork for future collaboration and networking.

Throughout the pandemic, all activities centred on online engagements. As travel restrictions eased, SARA transitioned to a working group model centred on in-person workshops held in South Africa between 2022 and 2023. Under the theme "Building equitable resilience in Southern Africa," a call for working group proposals went out in late 2021. More than 40 proposals were received, and eight working groups were selected in February 2022. Focusing on knowledge synthesis, a diverse range of topics spanning various types of systems emerged, including conservation, urban planning, disaster resilience, and gender transformative approaches. This reflected SARA's commitment to addressing multidimensional resilience and development challenges.

Between 2022 and 2023, the working groups were convened three times for in-person workshops in Stellenbosch, South Africa. The aim was to facilitate inclusive and contextualized knowledge co-production. Over three years, starting in 2021, SARA convened diverse experts to generate insights and address Southern Africa's most pressing resilience and development challenges, while enhancing connectivity with other academies in the Global South to synthesize, amplify, and legitimize southern expertise.

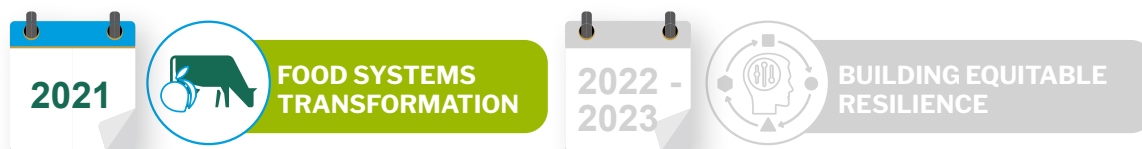
1. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/26395916.2022.2150317>

2. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/26395916.2022.2097478>



Image: Kelvin Trautman | KANDS Collective

What was achieved under SARA?



Food Systems Transformation

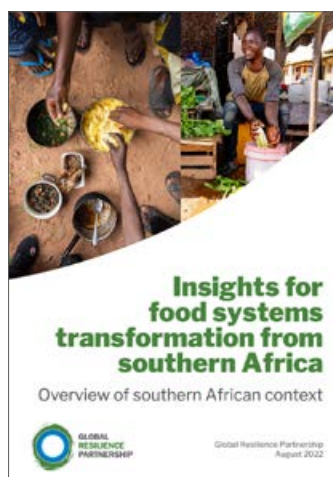
Guided by SARA's mandate, the inaugural year of SARA (2021) focused on addressing the complexities of building more resilient, sustainable, and equitable food systems. Acting in a convening role, SARA brought together communities, networks, and partnerships to explore and tackle key questions around food security.

Three linked virtual workshops were attended by diverse stakeholders from across the region.



Published as a series of insight briefs, key themes and recommendations emerged from the SARA activities and discussions throughout 2021, emphasizing the importance of anchoring food systems on environmental and supporting ecosystem functions. The aim was to unlock key actions for transforming food systems in Southern Africa. It was recognized that transformation is needed to adapt Southern Africa's current food system to future uncertainties, ensuring climate-resilience and environmental and social sustainability. Research was identified as playing an integral role in driving this shift.

Food Systems Insights Series



The insight series contextualized SARA's actions in 2021, a pivotal year marked by significant events driving food systems transformation. The year demonstrated global leaders' commitment to accelerating and deepening this transformation in alignment with the 2030 Agenda. Moreover, the extensive participation of a wide range of stakeholders in food system dialogues at various scales, from local to global, illustrated a strong desire for witnessing and engaging in food systems transformation.



1
Change the way
information
systems work



2
Enable blended
and local food
systems



3
Focus on developing
sustainable rural
livelihoods



4
Address
fundamental food
production issues



5
Change mindsets, work
at the systems level, and
focus on nexus issues



6
Rethink
governance and
convening power



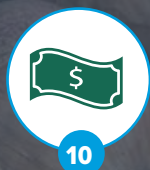
7
Address justice
and food
sovereignty



8
Engage industry



9
Place gender and youth
at the centre of food
systems transformation



10
Scale and target
financing



11
Support regional
level food systems
interventions



12
Mobilise networks
and social
movements

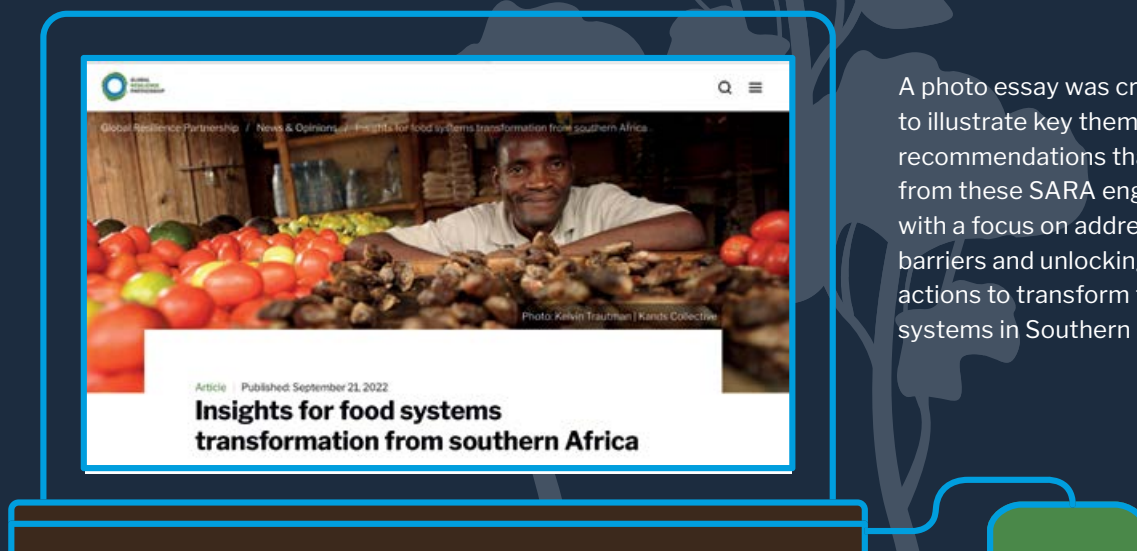


13
Embrace individual
transformation



14
Adopt futures
methodologies and build
capacity for futures thinking

Dissemination of Key Messages – Photo Essay



A photo essay was created to illustrate key themes and recommendations that emerged from these SARA engagements, with a focus on addressing barriers and unlocking important actions to transform food systems in Southern Africa.

LESSONS LEARNT: WHAT WORKED WELL DURING THE ENGAGEMENTS ON FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION?

The workshops successfully brought together voices from diverse stakeholder groups within the food systems arena, fostering stronger connections among them, particularly between national government stakeholders and researchers. By incorporating multiple perspectives, the workshops facilitated discussions on how understanding linkages across sectors could inform practical actions for transforming food systems. Notably, there was an intentional focus on equity during the sessions, prompting exploration into how knowledge could be more equitably mobilized.

Moreover, the workshops played a crucial role in introducing futures thinking to key change-makers, laying the groundwork for guiding the transformation of Southern Africa's food

systems. By sensitizing stakeholders in the region to potential futures and options for change, the workshops broadened perspectives on addressing urgent and disruptive issues. They also served as a platform for inspiring innovative ideas, particularly through the 'Seeds of Change' initiative, and for sharing recommendations and actionable options.

Throughout the SARA processes, particularly evident in the last two workshops, participants were exposed to systems thinking, which encouraged them to move beyond incremental change and siloed approaches. In the virtual workshop setting, the use of online tools like Miro enhanced engagement and interaction among participants.



OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH: WHAT CAN BE IMPROVED IN FUTURE INITIATIVES AROUND FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION

Enhancing accessibility by making discourse more inclusive, particularly for non-academic participants and those unfamiliar with online platforms. This involves facilitating equitable participation for farmers groups, among others.

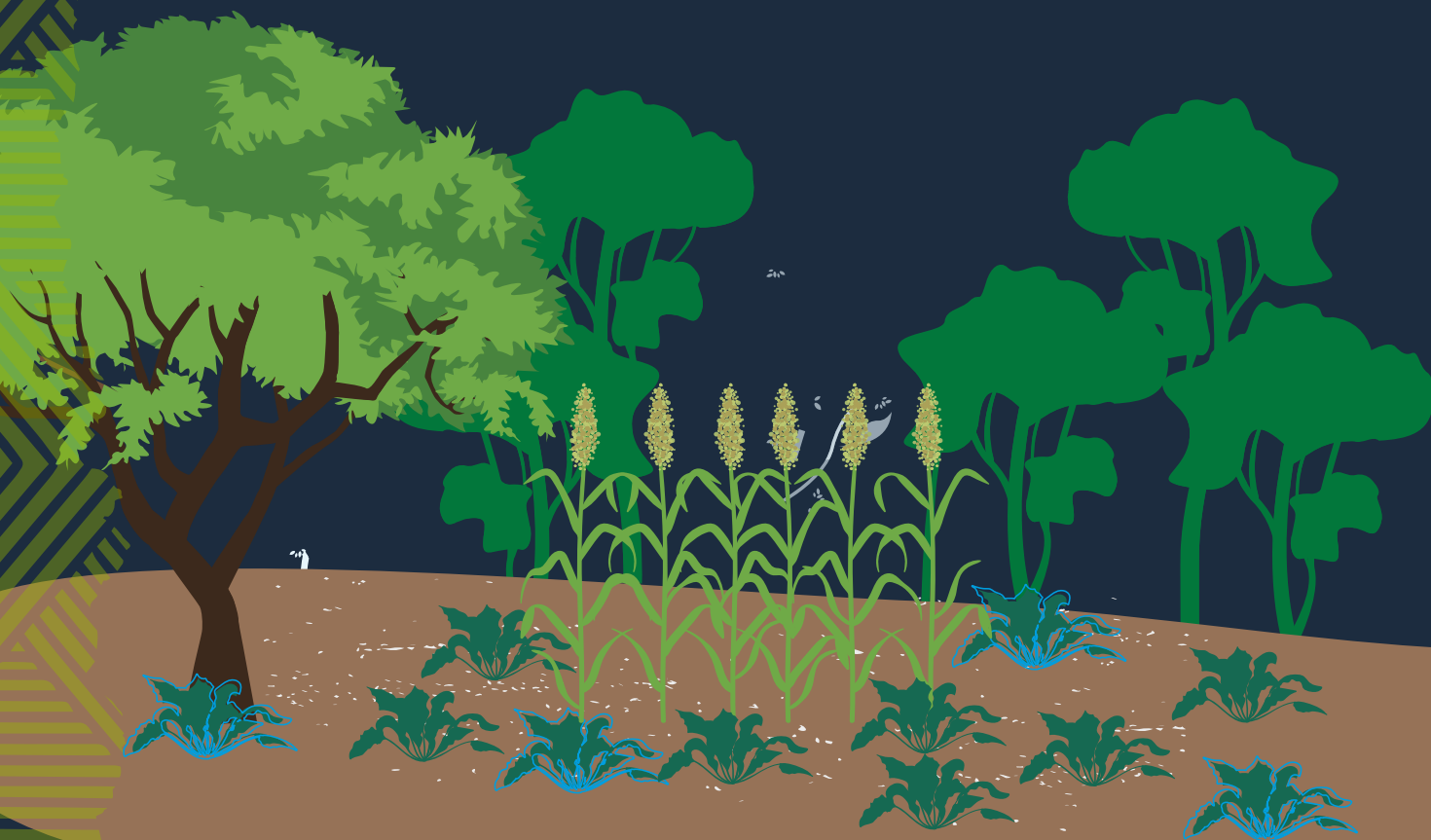
Bridging academic concepts with real-world implementation, particularly by engaging with the private sector and commercial farmers to identify specific, actionable measures at a granular level.

Strengthening the connection between workshops and actionable outcomes, such as issuing a clear 'call to action' or aligning discussions with specific policy or institutional reform exercises. This includes clarifying roles and responsibilities for stakeholders to advance key issues and initiatives.

Curating and fostering relationships and linkages formed during workshop events, ensuring clear roles, support, and engagement towards regional policy issues. This could involve producing policy briefs or joint submissions from SARA event attendees for major events or national policy contexts.

Establishing better thematic linkages between food systems, nutrition, and climate change, with a greater focus on practical, nature-based solutions to food systems transformation alongside technological approaches.

Improving transparency regarding SARA's alignment with other relevant initiatives, such as post-summit processes from the United Nations Food Systems Summit and engagement dialogues across different African Union Member States.



REFLECTING ON SARA'S OBJECTIVES IN ITS FIRST YEAR

In its inaugural year, SARA aimed to achieve two primary objectives:

- Building a collaborative network of regional resilience and development experts; and
- Identifying key resilience and development challenges, along with sources of change and leverage points for transformations in Southern Africa.

During this initial phase, SARA made important progress. It solidified partnerships with strategically important regional organizations such as the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), the USAID Resilient Waters Programme, the Centre for Coordination of Agricultural Research and Development for Southern Africa (CCARDESA), and SAPECS. These partnerships also extended to research institutes like the International Food Policy Research Institute, the African Centre for Biodiversity, and the Centre for Transformative Agricultural and Food Systems at the University of KwaZulu Natal. SARA's activities attracted the interest of think tanks and consultancies like the Palladium Group and RIAHSAH. Several of these connections led to working group proposals submitted under the SARA call for working groups for 2022/2023, indicating an interest to continue collaborative

relationships.

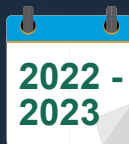
However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, SARA's activities in 2021 were constrained to online events, limiting the effectiveness of networking and collaboration typically facilitated by in-person interactions.

Despite these challenges, SARA's activities in 2021 yielded key findings and recommendations for addressing food system challenges in Southern Africa and promoting transformations towards more equitable and sustainable food futures. While focusing on the theme of food systems proved successful in the pilot phase of the academy, it became evident that the academy's next phase should broaden its thematic scope to support expert collaborations on various topics. This realization led to the development of the call for working groups under the guiding (and intentionally broad) theme of 'Building equitable resilience in Southern Africa.' These working groups, comprising researchers and practitioners, were tasked with synthesizing knowledge across disciplines and sectors to inform research and policy. This approach aimed to expand SARA's reach and strengthen expert collaborations in the longer term through in-person workshops and engagements.





FOOD SYSTEMS
TRANSFORMATION



BUILDING EQUITABLE
RESILIENCE

Building Equitable Resilience

Based on the experiences gathered during SARA's inaugural year, which focused on food systems transformation, the subsequent phase spanning from 2022 to the end of 2023 broadened the thematic scope to building equitable resilience. Following a competitive selection process, eight working groups were selected in early 2022 to synthesize insights from the Southern African region, concentrating on the challenges and opportunities of fostering systems that are both more resilient to global change and address societal inequities. The execution of this two-year programme, centred around working groups focused on diverse topics under a unified theme, was inspired by working group models used in SAPECS, as well as the National Socio-Environmental Synthesis Centre (SESYNC) in the United States. This approach emphasizes collaborative efforts between academics and practitioners, fostering multifaceted discussions and cross-disciplinary knowledge co-production to address complex regional challenges through both research and non-academic endeavours. Under the overarching theme of 'Building equitable resilience in Southern Africa,' the working groups were given the freedom to explore various topics or systems of interest, such as food systems, urban systems, stewardship initiatives, resilience measurement, protected areas, or similar.

The primary tasks of the working groups over the two-year initiative were to:

1. Develop scientific papers for a special issue in an academic journal.
2. Create knowledge products (e.g. policy briefs, posters, toolkits) and engagement processes tailored to non-academic audiences and decision-makers, expanding the reach and impact of SARA outcomes.

With the help of its funders, SARA provided support for three in-person workshops, covering the costs of the venue, travel, and accommodation for all working group members. SARA also led the

coordination of the academic special issue in the journal *Ecology & Society* and covered open access publication fees for these papers. In addition, SARA funded the non-academic knowledge products developed by the working groups. To help the groups with the development of these products, a science communication expert was hired in early 2023. Finally, SARA assisted with the dissemination of knowledge products through the extensive communication channels of GRP and CST.

BOX 1. WORKING GROUP SELECTION CRITERIA

- Groups must identify at least one designated working group lead. Groups should include no more than 10 total participants, including the working group lead(s). Group members do not need to be based permanently in the region, but there should be evidence that all members have at least some experience of working in the Southern African context.
- Working group leads may not lead more than one group. In addition, working group membership in more than one group is discouraged.
- Groups must include at least one group member who has expertise in resilience or development practice.
- Projects should result in at least one scientific paper for a special issue and one non-academic knowledge product.
- Projects should apply a synthesis approach that combines research and practice perspectives and the co-production of knowledge across sectors and disciplines.
- Projects should include a clear link to a policy agenda relevant to the region, with the potential to inform decision-makers (the proposal should specify how project outcomes may inform decision-making).



Working groups overview

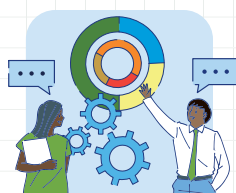
Since early 2022, SARA supported [eight working groups](#) comprising a diverse range of experts, from early-career professionals to established

researchers and practitioners. Find a detailed description of the working groups and member lists in Annex 1.



Urban Food Systems

Building equitable and resilient urban food systems in Southern Africa



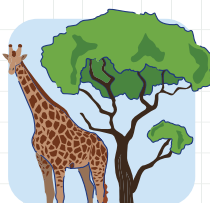
Monitoring and Evaluation

Harnessing the power of monitoring and evaluation for equitable resilience



Urban Informality

Informality and equitable urban resilience



Conservation Systems

Equitable resilience in Southern African conservation systems



Metacoupling

Enhancing equity and resilience in an interconnected world



Food Systems Seeds

Seeding equity in African Food Systems



Disaster risk

Towards equitable resilience in Southern Africa



Gender Transformative Approaches

Integration of gender transformative approaches for equitable and resilient livelihoods in Southern Africa



Workshops

The working group initiative was a pivotal component of SARA's approach, fostering collaborative engagement among experts from various backgrounds and experiences over a two-year period.

To convene the working groups several strategies were employed, with the primary focus on three in-person workshops. The three workshops, all held in Stellenbosch, South Africa, provided a conducive environment for focused discussions and interactions, facilitated by both plenary sessions and working group breakouts. Unlike traditional conference settings, the venue offered a unique blend of seclusion and scenic beauty, providing working groups with access to various locations for activities within the captivating natural environment of the Cape Winelands, allowing participants to immerse themselves fully in the collaborative process without external distractions.

The working group members attending the workshops represented a mix of researchers and practitioners, both established and early-career individuals. While some members were familiar

with each other, many were meeting for the first time, contributing to a rich tapestry of perspectives and expertise.

The workshops were meticulously designed to offer a balanced mix of sessions, including skills development sessions such as a tailored 'science-communications' mentoring. Beyond formal sessions, participants also engaged in various activities such as dinners, walks, and even a talent-show, fostering camaraderie and strengthening interpersonal connections.

One of SARA's notable achievements was its ability to convene and retain the engagement of participants throughout the initiative, demonstrating the effectiveness of this approach in fostering meaningful collaboration and knowledge co-production. This provided a robust foundation for advancing resilience and development initiatives in Southern Africa.

The in-person workshops were structured as follows:



**KICK OFF WORKSHOP:
5TH – 8TH APRIL 2022**

Key aspirations that emerged from the workshop included a desire to expand networks, develop partnerships, and explore potential collaborations. The workshop was attended by 46 participants representing 29 organisations or institutions.



**SECOND WORKSHOP:
24TH – 26TH OCTOBER 2022**

The main purpose of this workshop was to reconvene working groups to advance the academic and non-academic products initiated during the first workshop. Additionally, it served to strengthen the SARA expert network and welcome new working group members that had not been able to attend the first workshop. This workshop was attended by 43 participants representing 23 organisations or institutions.



**FINAL WORKSHOP:
22ND - 25TH AUGUST 2023**

This workshop focused on supporting the groups to finalize their non-academic engagement processes and products, and plan for the last six months of the SARA initiative. The workshop also served as the final in-person meeting and was attended by 44 participants representing 23 organisations or institutions.

Achievements of SARA

Special Feature in *Ecology & Society*



One of the key outputs for each SARA working group was an academic paper, curated in a special feature of the journal *Ecology & Society* titled ‘**Enhancing social-ecological resilience and equity in Southern Africa: Insights from research and practice**’.

The editors of the special feature included the following SARA working group members:

- Maike Hamann, CST and University of Exeter (lead coordinator of the SARA initiative)
- Reinette (Oonsie) Biggs, CST
- Alta de Vos, CST
- Regardt Ferreira, Tulane University
- Caitlin Shannon, CARE

FOCUS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SPECIAL FEATURE

Southern Africa grapples with pressing sustainability and development challenges, including severe climate change impacts, poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation³. In response, significant scholarly efforts, innovations in practices and policy, funding investment, and the development of science-policy networks have emerged to address these challenges and support the region's journey towards more resilient and equitable futures.^{4,5}

However, much of this valuable scholarship and practice remains under-documented, resulting in international policy and discourse heavily favouring knowledge and expertise from the Global North. To address this imbalance, the primary academic outcome of SARA was to synthesize relevant knowledge on how to build more resilient and equitable social-ecological systems in Southern Africa through a process of knowledge co-production. Each group approached their co-production in a different way, including situating research within the region's particular context and explicitly recognizing multiple ways of knowing.⁶

Eight working groups explored topics spanning a wide variety of systems and research areas, from protected areas to urban systems, and from disaster risk reduction to gender transformative approaches. The Special Feature presents the working groups' academic outputs to *Ecology & Society's* broad audience, sensitizing global readership to Southern African contexts and contributions, and providing conceptual and theoretical development using a Global South lens.

Specifically, the Special Feature aims to address the following questions:

- How do efforts to enhance resilience potentially undermine equity, and vice versa?
- What approaches or strategies have been successful in building resilience while achieving equitable outcomes?
- What frameworks are useful for merging the concepts of resilience and equity, and what conceptual advances have been informed by the Southern African/Global South context?



3. Biggs R. et al. 2022. Social-ecological change: insights from the Southern African Program on Ecosystem Change and Society. *Ecosystems and People* 18: 447-468.

4. SADC 2020. Southern African Development Community Resilience Framework 2020-2030. Available at www.sadc.int.

5. Biggs R. et al. 2023. The Southern African Program on Ecosystem Change and Society: an emergent community of practice. *Ecosystems and People* 19: 2150317.

6. Norström A. et al. 2020. Principles for knowledge co-production in sustainability research. *Nature sustainability* 3: 182-190.

NOVELTY AND RELEVANCE OF THE SPECIAL FEATURE

The Special Feature brings novelty both in its individual papers and the overarching editorial approach. Each paper represents two years of collaborative effort and co-learning, blending insights from scientists and practitioners, and synthesising knowledge across a wide range of cases and contexts. By intentionally keeping the

synthesis process open-ended, without prescribing specific concepts, definitions, or frameworks to use, the eight working groups generated a diverse and transdisciplinary array of academic outputs, offering varied perspectives on equity and illustrating the rich diversity of approaches and insights for building resilience in the Southern African region.

The academic outputs have been additionally strengthened by each group's engagement in a non-academic process, which helped to identify key audiences and sharpen the papers' relevance and messaging.

The introductory editorial outlines the different approaches pursued by the working groups in their interpretations of "building resilience and equity", highlighting key conceptual synergies and divergences. This allows the editorial to examine

critically the nexus of resilience and equity, contributing to the growing scholarship on resilience and sustainable development. The editorial further synthesizes crucial theoretical and practical insights from across the groups, offering guidance not only for the Southern African region and the Global South, but also for broader contexts. Furthermore, the editorial incorporates a reflection on the working group initiative as a means of co-producing knowledge, sharing valuable lessons learnt from this kind of transdisciplinary process.



Non-academic engagement process

Beyond the academic outputs collected in the special feature, a key objective of SARA was to support the co-production of policy-relevant knowledge to inform global conversations. Central to this effort were the innovative Non-Academic Products (NAP), a key aspect of SARA, enabling the working groups to effectively communicate key messages and strategically engage directly with decision-makers and other relevant, non-academic audiences.

SARA facilitated two engagement and learning sessions during Workshop Two and a dedicated NAP Day during Workshop Three, led by Sabrina Trautman, a seasoned science communications and resilience and climate change expert. To bolster the production and execution of the NAP, SARA collaborated with KANDS Collective, a specialized development and science communications agency based in South Africa. This tailored support for the working groups empowered the diverse teams to identify their key audiences, strategize impactful messaging and products, and determine effective packaging and dissemination methods.

KANDS Collective's unique process was tailored to foster co-development and co-design of each of

the NAP working groups. By integrating in-house and stakeholder engagement, as well as policy expertise, KANDS Collective played a crucial role in guiding the working groups through the intricacies of framing academic research for non-academic audiences and navigating considerations related to uptake and behaviour change. KANDS Collective's expertise not only enriched the process but also facilitated the seamless integration of engagement strategies into the brainstorming and development phases of each working group. By harnessing the collective knowledge and skills of both SARA participants and KANDS Collective, the working groups were empowered to translate their ideas into tangible outputs that resonated with their target audiences, thereby maximizing the impact and effectiveness of their endeavours.

The partnership with KANDS Collective not only streamlined the NAP process but also ensured a cohesive and tailored approach across all outputs. Without this collaborative support, each working group would have faced significant challenges in executing their initiatives independently, resulting in disparate outputs lacking in uniformity and effectiveness.

SARA - Non Academic Outputs

Research Synthesis and Guidance Notes

Guidance Note: Supporting transformation to a more sustainable and equitable future: insights from seeds of change in African food systems. A guidance note for research and development funders



Supporting transformations to a more sustainable and equitable future: Insights from seeds of change in African food systems

A GUIDANCE NOTE FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT FUNDERS

This brief offers insights into how innovative, marginal initiatives – so-called “seeds” – can contribute towards transformation to a more sustainable and equitable world.

Insights are gathered from interviews with the authors of a variety of SeedInitiatives in African food systems. These interviews have been conducted to understand equity and sustainability, the barriers they face in scaling up, and how these initiatives may be better supported. The goal of this brief is to identify knowledge that can support the realization and support of potentially transformative initiatives, and guide future programming choices.

Key insights and recommendations presented here are from the SeedInitiatives project and are not intended to be a comprehensive overview of the landscape. The brief is intended to provide a starting point for further exploration and research. The brief is intended to provide a starting point for further exploration and research.



Research Summary Brief: Spotlighting power dynamics: Metacoupling as a lens for understanding equitable resilience in Southern Africa



Spotlighting power dynamics: Metacoupling as a lens for understanding equitable resilience in southern African

A metacoupling approach explores the interconnections and interdependencies of social ecological systems (SES) at multiple scales. This research brief describes the metacoupling framework using southern African case studies linked to export horticultural value chains and transboundary resilience to demonstrate how a greater focus on cross-scale (or metacoupled) connections can help identify key leverage points for fostering resilience and equity.

Resilience and equity are usually considered within a nation-based lens, providing important context-specific insights. However, our current understanding of the interconnected world suggests that external factors have important roles to play in shaping local economic and equity outcomes. This, plus, the increasing focus on equity preservation in international development, has prompted a need to explore the connections between SES and the flow of resources, knowledge, and power across scales.

Definitions

- Value chains** refer to the entire sequence of processes, including production, from the production of the raw materials to the final use of the product by the end user. The value chain is a sequence of activities that create value for the end user.
- Cross-scale value chains** are value chains that operate at multiple scales, from the local to the global. They are characterized by the flow of resources, knowledge, and power across scales.
- Equity** is a concept that refers to the fair and just treatment of all people, regardless of their race, gender, or social status. It is a goal that should be pursued in all development work.
- Resilience** is the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change so as to still retain essentially the same function. It is a goal that should be pursued in all development work.



Case Study: Empowering marginalised communities in biosphere reserves through a metacoupling approach



Empowering marginalized communities in biosphere reserves through a metacoupling approach

Metacoupling offers a framework for multi-stakeholder dialogue when managing biosphere reserves, and is crucial for achieving sustainable and fair outcomes – particularly when addressing equity issues.

What are biosphere reserves (BRs)? Biosphere reserves are sites for testing and demonstrating approaches to understanding and managing change and interactions between social and ecological systems to create functional landscapes, including conflict prevention and management of biodiversity.

Biosphere reserves equal three pillars:

- Conservation of biodiversity and ecological diversity
- Economic development that is socio-culturally and environmentally sustainable
- Logistic support, understanding development through research, monitoring, education and training

South Africa is home to ten UNESCO Biosphere Reserves: The Cape West Coast, Cape Winelands, Garden Route, Greater Cape, Agulhas, Kruger to Canyons, Mapungubet, Namaqualand, Namaqualand, and Namaqualand. These reserves are home to a variety of ecosystems and are important for the conservation of biodiversity and the promotion of sustainable development.

See SARA's Metacoupling Brief for more details.



Research summary brief: Group concept mapping and Equitable Resilience in Southern Africa



Research Summary Brief: Group Concept Mapping and Equitable Resilience in Southern Africa

Background

The concept of resilience has faced criticism for not adequately addressing differential vulnerability and issues related to social justice, equity and inclusion (Barn and Reid 2003, 2005; Latham and Botsch 2004; Botsch 2008). “Equitable resilience” has emerged to acknowledge that vulnerability and capacities are unevenly distributed across societies (Muller et al. 2018). Most research on equitable resilience originates from the Global North, with limited studies focusing on developing countries and the Global South. This research aims to fill that gap by exploring equitable resilience within the context of Southern Africa. With approval from several institutions’ research ethics committees, a mixed-methods exploratory pilot study was conducted using Group Concept Mapping (GCM) to holistically and contextually examine equitable resilience in this region. Context of Southern Africa in relation to equitable resilience.



Practice Brief: Integration of Gender Transformative Approaches for Equitable and Resilient Livelihoods in Southern Africa



INTEGRATION OF GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES FOR EQUITABLE AND RESILIENT LIVELIHOODS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA



Practice Brief: Using monitoring and evaluation to build transformative equity and resilience in South Africa



Using monitoring and evaluation to build transformative equity and resilience in South Africa

LESSONS FROM PRACTICE SEPTEMBER 2023

The field of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is increasingly connected with issues of power. These are not only the power of the state, but also the power of the private sector, the power of the media, and the power of the community. This brief explores the role of M&E in building transformative equity and resilience in South Africa.

What is resilience? Resilience is the capacity to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change so as to still retain essentially the same function. It is a goal that should be pursued in all development work.

What is transformative equity? Transformative equity is a concept that refers to the fair and just treatment of all people, regardless of their race, gender, or social status. It is a goal that should be pursued in all development work.

What is monitoring and evaluation (M&E)? Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is a process that involves the collection, analysis, and use of information to improve the performance of a system. It is a goal that should be pursued in all development work.

What is the role of M&E in building transformative equity and resilience? M&E plays a crucial role in building transformative equity and resilience by providing a framework for multi-stakeholder dialogue and by identifying key leverage points for fostering resilience and equity.

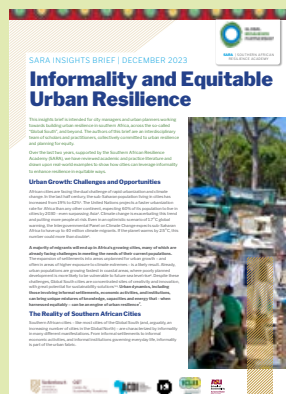
What are the key challenges to building transformative equity and resilience? The key challenges to building transformative equity and resilience are the lack of data, the lack of capacity, and the lack of political will.

What are the key lessons learned from the practice? The key lessons learned from the practice are that M&E is a process, not a product, and that it should be owned by the community.



Policy Engagement Briefs

Insights Brief: Informality and Equitable Urban Resilience



Research Summary Brief: Building equitable resilience in conservation areas



Policy Note: Creating more resilient and equitable urban food systems in Southern Africa

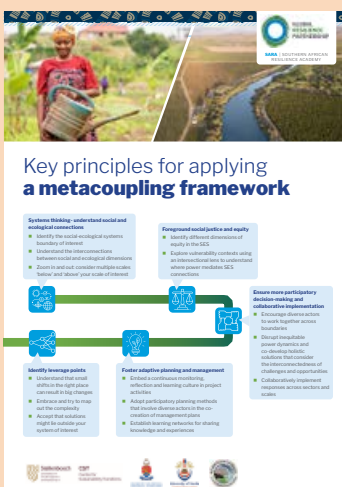


Policy Brief: Advancing equitable and resilient livelihoods in Southern Africa through Integrating Gender Transformative Approaches

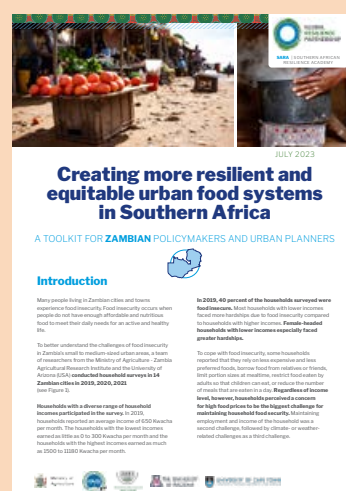


Toolkits and Frameworks

Framework: Key principles for applying a metacoupling framework



Policy Toolkit: Creating more resilient and equitable urban food systems in Southern Africa. A toolkit for Zambian policymakers and urban planners



Photovoice brief: Exploring community resilience: An application of photo voice in post-graduate studies

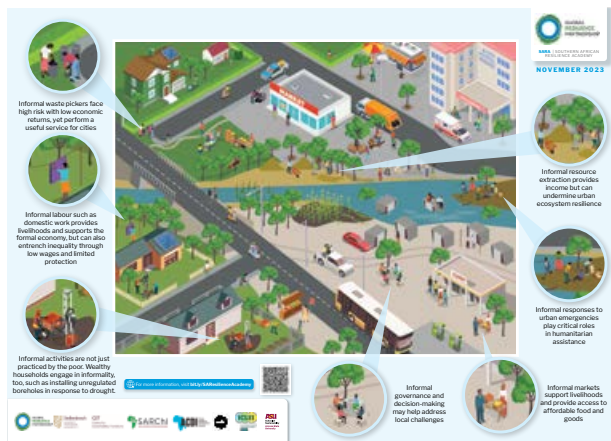


Infographics and Posters

Cartoon: Meet Mutinta as she navigates Choma's urban food system



Infographic: Formality and informality



Cartoon: Informality and collaboration: A story of sand, land and flooding



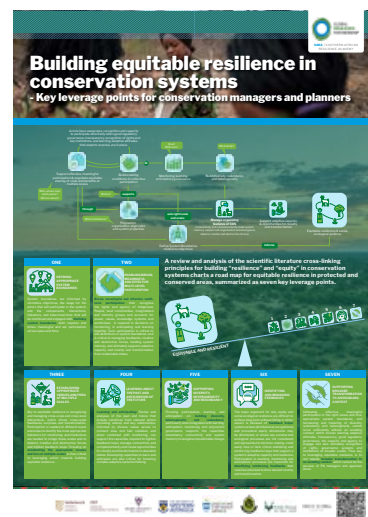
Poster: Addressing informality for equitable urban resilience



Toolkit poster: Creating more resilient and equitable urban food systems in Southern Africa



Poster: Building equitable resilience in conservation systems



Strategic Communication through blogs and social media

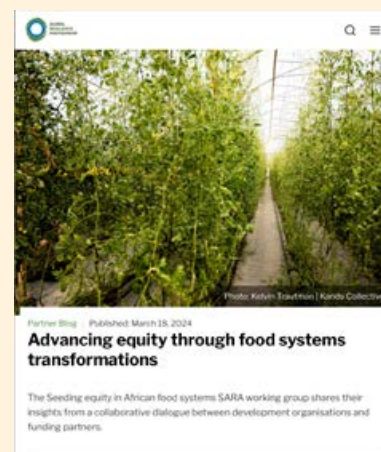
Using monitoring and evaluation to build equity and resilience



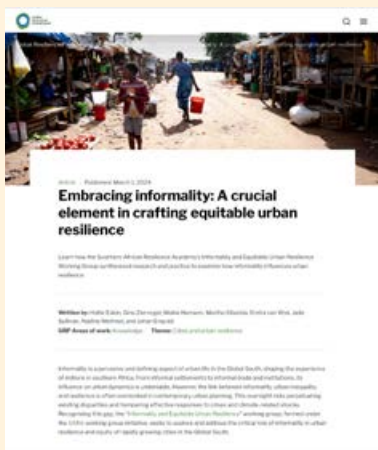
Bridging the gap: Strengthening urban food system in Zambia through resilience initiatives



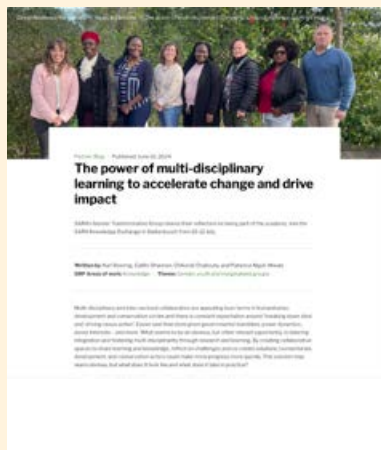
Advancing equity through food systems transformations



Embracing informality: A crucial element in crafting equitable urban resilience



The power of multi-disciplinary learning to accelerate change and drive impact



Key principles for applying a metacoupling framework





Highlights of the non-academic engagement process

The non-academic process went beyond producing outputs; it actively engaged stakeholders and influenced policy, catalysing meaningful change beyond academia's traditional boundaries.

ENGAGING PRACTITIONERS

BOX 2.

USING MONITORING AND EVALUATION TO BUILD EQUITY AND RESILIENCE

The M&E (monitoring and evaluation) working group brought together six monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) practitioner-researchers from across South Africa, giving them a rare opportunity to reflect deeply on their practice and experience. Through this, they co-created a synthesis of “voices from practice,” offering an account of how M&E practitioners can use monitoring and evaluation in a way that builds equity and resilience.

The brief was based on the groups engagement in several key meetings including presenting at the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association's (SAMEA) Community of Practice on M&E for a Just Transition. This allowed for a demand driven focus for their practice brief and tailored sharing of key insights focused on a practitioner audience.

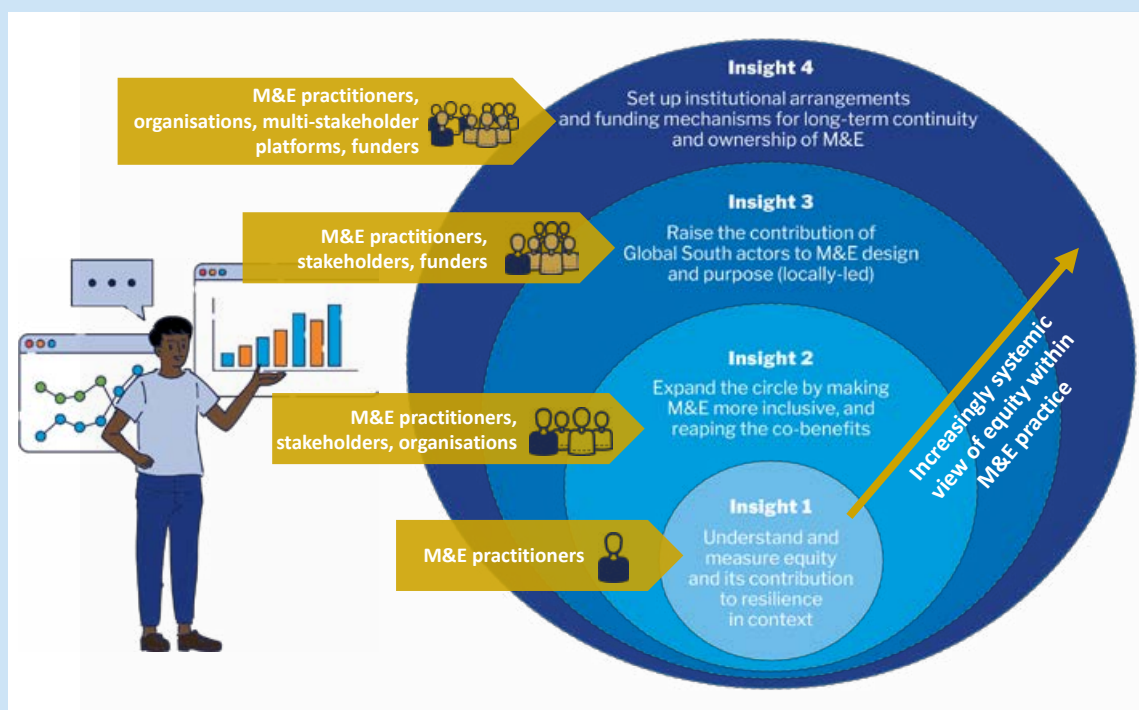


Figure 1: Key insights on ways in which inequity shows up in [M&E practice](#).

Key reflections from the group included:

- The deeper integration of M&E into a system enhances its support aspirational values like equitable resilience and a Just Transition.
- Achieving M&E for equitable resilience is an ongoing process.
- Capacity building is important to promote equitable M&E – this is needed for researchers, practitioners, evaluation commissioners, funding agencies, project managers and project participants alike.
- Demonstrating the ‘co-benefits’ of inclusive, equitable M&E, such as agency, motivation, relationships, networks, social cohesion, coherence, and changes in power relations is crucial. Such evidence would help to advocate for more inclusive approaches, given that these take longer and require more and different resources. This is particularly pertinent in impact evaluation, as one specialization within broader M&E practice.

POLICY IMPACT

BOX 3

POLICY IMPACT ON URBAN FOOD SYSTEMS

The ‘Building Equitable and Resilient Urban Food Systems in Southern Africa’ working group delved into the complexities of urban food systems in Zambia and Southern Africa, addressing challenges and identifying opportunities for strategic urban planning to promote resilience and equity. Their effort culminated in tangible outputs aimed at local policy makers and urban planners, facilitating direct engagement and dissemination of key findings at the grassroots level.

Local level policy impact

Members of the working group actively engaged with local policymakers, presenting a comprehensive policy toolkit and notes designed to guide decision-making at the local level. These efforts fostered direct dialogue and

dissemination of key findings at the grassroots level. Key action areas recommended in the policy toolkit include:

- **Learn more about the Constituency Development Fund (CDF)**, which saw an increase to K28.3 million per constituency in the 2023 National budget to promote inclusive development. The CDF can support government councils to implement policies and projects that improve urban food systems in Zambia.
- **Recognize the important role of street vending and urban agriculture.** With investment and policy planning, street vending and urban agriculture may become important pillars in a resilient and equitable urban food system.

- **Learn more about local policies**, such as the:

- Markets and Bus Station Act to help establish new markets and improve the management of existing markets;
- Urban Development Policy to ensure that new urban residential developments include zoning for markets and retail shops; and
- Urban Energy Policy to improve access to energy for cooking, lighting, and refrigeration in households and markets.

- **Learn more about national policies**, including the National Food and Nutrition Policy, National Agriculture Policy, National Lands Policy, Food Safety Act, National Social Protection Policy, National Transport Policy, National Climate Change Policy, and National Adaptation Plan for Climate Change.

A policymaker from the Ministry of Agriculture Zambia remarked, **“we have achieved a non-academic product that will speak to policymakers at local government levels.”** A working group member added, **“being able to design our non-academic products and engagement processes with key decision-makers in Zambia will have an impact on how urban food systems are designed and managed.”**





The policy note '[Creating more resilient and equitable urban food systems in Southern Africa](#),' developed by the working group, highlights key policies affecting urban food systems in Southern Africa. It underscores the pivotal role of urban planners in shaping these systems and stresses the importance of inclusive representation and stakeholder engagement in decision-making processes. Recommended roles for urban planners include integrated urban food systems planning, sustainable transportation and food distribution, food sensitive infrastructure planning, land use planning, access to food retailers, and climate resilience.

Strengthening urban food systems

Southern Africa's urban food systems are characterized by a blend of formal and informal food retailers, urban agriculture, and food sharing, are diverse but often fall short in ensuring food security for low- to middle-income urban households. To describe how the various food sources in urban food systems contribute to household resilience, the working group developed a fictional narrative centred on Mutinta navigating the urban food system in Choma, Zambia to support their policy engagement. The narrative emphasizes the critical role of food systems policy and planning in ensuring that safe, nutritious, affordable, and culturally appropriate food reaches individuals like Mutinta and her family, particularly during times of adversity. It underscores that regulations and policies directly and indirectly affect the type of urban food systems in an area and shape how people can effectively navigate these systems.

BOX 4. KEY MESSAGES FOR POLICY UPTAKE ON URBAN INFORMALITY

The 'Informality and Equitable Urban Resilience' working group, in collaboration with partners including Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI), leveraged off existing engagements as an opportunity to disseminate insights on the role of informality in urban resilience and equity. Key points about urban informality were integrated into the opening remarks of two sessions at COP28 in Dubai:

1. The first session was held during the Local Climate Action Summit, with opening remarks by Sheela Patel, founder and director of the Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC) and former chair of Slum Dwellers International (SDI), as well as UN Climate Change High-Level Champion.
2. The second session addressed issues of housing access and equity. Key messages on informality were integrated into the opening remarks by Her Excellency Ms. Razan Al Mubarak, a UN Climate Change High-Level Champion. By challenging preconceived notions of informality, the working group sought to inform international and national efforts to identify more equitable, resilient, and sustainable pathways for urban development, with particular attention to the challenges faced in the Global South.

Key messages conveyed:

- Informality is a pervasive and dominant feature of our cities: it is part and parcel of the overall social, economic, institutional and spatial fabric of urban systems. Informality is here to stay.
- Recognizing and proactively engaging with

informality leverages opportunities for enhancing community and city-wide resilience, because informality is a source of solutions as well as challenges to urban resilience.

- Investment in partnerships is essential to unlocking informality's contributions to urban resilience and equity.



Figure 2: *Key messages on urban informality*

BOX 5.**ENGAGING FUNDERS IN A ROUNDTABLE IN TRANSFORMATION FOR FOOD SYSTEM**

The SARA working group on ‘Seeding equity in African food systems’ drew extensively on the [“Seeds of Good Anthropocenes: Fostering Food-System Transformation in Africa”](#) initiative. The working group identified 24 innovative initiatives (or “seeds”) across South Africa, Kenya, Ghana, Malawi, Benin, and Zambia, that showed potential positive impacts on equity in addition to their contributions to the food system. The team aimed to assess these initiatives’ impacts, barriers, and avenues for support and scalability to explore pathways for achieving greater equity. In October 2023, an online session was held with researchers and various development funders, including the International Development Research Centre, USAID, Wellcome Trust, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), among others, facilitating a dialogue on how to better support initiatives fostering transformations towards more equitable food systems in Africa.

This collaborative dialogue served as a platform for the funders to share experiences, successes, and strategies in supporting transformative initiatives. Discussion focused on aligning funder realities with the needs of transformative small-scale initiatives, creating meaningful connections, and fostering a positive enabling environment to support seed initiatives with transformative potential. A crucial aspect highlighted during the session was the significance of building social capital as a preliminary condition for enabling seed adoption. Establishing strong social connections within communities emerged as a critical factor in fostering engagement with policy initiatives and ensuring the successful integration of transformative seeds. The ongoing dialogue will further explore opportunities for aligning funders and seeds, creating enabling policy environments, and leveraging networking platforms to drive meaningful change.

**BOX 6.****APPLYING PHOTOVOICE TO RESILIENCE – AN OPPORTUNITY FOR POSTGRADUATES**

The ‘Disaster risk: Towards equitable resilience in Southern Africa’ working group incorporated the Photovoice⁷ methodology into the postgraduate psychology programme at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa. The initiative aimed to facilitate student engagement within their communities and enable them to investigate resilience from their unique viewpoints and perspectives. Students were tasked with employing

the Photovoice methodology to identify and document what they personally considered as defining elements of resilience within their communities. Through active engagement and utilisation of Photovoice, students could advocate for positive change, potentially enhancing resilience and well-being within the very communities they studied.

7. Photovoice is a qualitative tool used in community-based participatory research to identify local issues and to facilitate local solutions, through the gathering of participant-taken photographs and narratives.

Some student reflections include:

Muslim resilience in a predominantly Christian-Afrikaans town, Stellenbosch
- “I realised that I walked past these buildings and signs and hardly thought anything about it. Taking a moment to really capture a picture, to think and reflect on it made me realise that my community has a rich history which is hardly spoken about”.

“Photovoice evoked a sense of pride in the resilience that is portrayed against the difficult conditions that our communities are experiencing. In the beginning we were all struggling to understand how we are supposed to capture resilience in our communities, but as the lecturer engaged with us and we had more training about the Photovoice method it became easier to understand the best way to capture and to summarise it.”

Community resilience in Mfuleni and Guguletu -
“Poverty can be dealt with at a communal level with minimal resources as seen with Isiphosabantu’s founder. The Amy (Biehl) Foundation shows how a horrific incident was used to fight against the violence of poverty.”



Figure 3: An example of the application of the [photovoice concept](#)

By fostering student engagement within their communities and empowering them to explore resilience from diverse perspectives, SARA has demonstrated the potential for broader adoption and scalability of similar initiatives within academic institutions. Through the utilization of Photovoice, students not only captured defining elements of resilience but also advocated for positive change within their communities. This experience equipped them with valuable skills and processes that can be replicated and scaled within other academic contexts.



BOX 7. **BUILDING EQUITABLE RESILIENCE IN CONSERVATION AREAS**

The working group on 'Equitable Resilience in Southern African Conservation Systems' recognised the importance of adopting a social-ecological systems perspective on natural resource governance. This perspective underscores the intertwined relationship between humans and nature, highlighting the complex adaptive nature of systems, which in turn demands an integrated approach to equity and resilience. In this light, the group's research provided a framework for developing future hypotheses, research questions, and experimental actions to understand and build equitable resilience in conservation areas, and more importantly, the landscapes in which they exist.

Through an equity lens, the group specified participants, places, processes, power dimensions, values, and institutions crucial for engaging, considering, and monitoring to achieve

sustainable and just systems. The research outcomes are poised to inform South African National Parks, the country's government agency for national conservation areas, and contribute to a wider engagement with the International Union for Conservation of Nature, where group members are actively involved.

Reflecting on the process, a working group member from the Conservation Systems group underscored the critical importance of considering engagement and the huge learning they had from the non-academic framing early in the research process. Questions regarding target audiences and key messages were instrumental in shaping their academic paper, prompting a shift in approach towards integrating engagement as a central process. This strategic shift has profoundly influenced the group's research approach and outcomes.

BOX 8. **BUILDING EQUITABLE RESILIENCE IN CONSERVATION AREAS**

The working group on 'gender transformative approaches' (GTAs) explored how the integration of GTAs into development programmes builds household, community, and ecosystem resilience. Their academic paper synthesized the narratives of male and female farmers from Malawi, grounding their research findings. These narratives vividly illustrated the profound impact of integrating GTAs on fostering equitable and resilient livelihoods.

Using the narratives and thematic analysis techniques, the group identified pathways linking GTAs to resilience outcomes, thereby enhancing understanding of how gender transformative activities within livelihood programmes contribute to resilience-building amidst shocks and stressors and the impact this has had on programme effectiveness. Based on their findings, the group formulated key policy recommendations, including:

- Moving beyond gender inclusive approaches and addressing structural barriers, such as harmful gender norms, to ensure the full participation and contribution of all genders in building resilient capacities.
- Incorporating women's self-empowerment alongside engagement with men and boys to harness the challenges and assets of each gender in fostering resilience.
- Analyzing and responding to the gendered dynamics of climate change impacts on livelihoods to effectively build resilience.
- Integrating GTAs alongside resilience-related interventions for increased impact and sustainability.

BOX 9. METACOUPLING AS A LENS FOR UNDERSTANDING EQUITABLE RESILIENCE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

The working group on 'Enhancing equity and resilience in an interconnected world' developed a brief to improve understanding of metacoupling and its importance for equitable resilience. The group outlined a metacoupling framework using Southern African case studies, particularly focusing on export

horticultural value chains and transboundary fisheries. These case studies illustrated how a deeper examination of cross-scale (i.e. metacoupled) connections can help identify key leverage points for fostering resilience and equity.

Metacoupling

Coupling **within** a system and **across** different systems

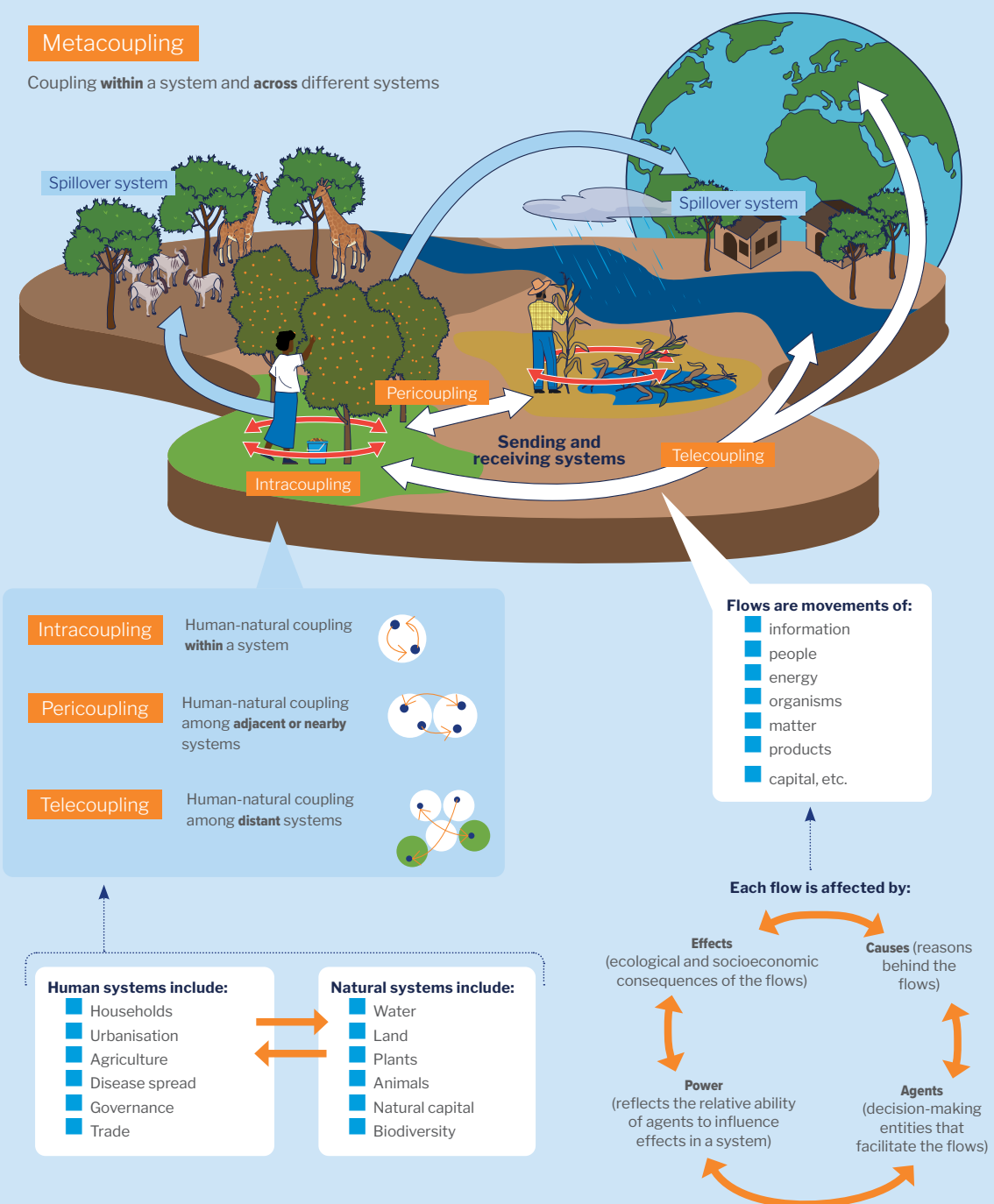


Figure 4: The *metacoupling framework* and link to sustainability

Key insights from their policy brief include:

- Increased connectedness in coupled systems alters social structures, access to natural resources, and the livelihoods of smallholder farmers.
- A metacoupling lens enables the surfacing of equity considerations by integrating human-nature interactions within a geographical area, as well as its adjacent and distant areas.
- A metacoupling lens offers a more contextual and nuanced understanding

of how equity issues are impacted by transboundary interactions. It identifies nodes of influence and paths of resource distribution, potentially unlocking new opportunities for those not previously benefiting.

- The metacoupling lens reveals crucial leverage points within a system, where interventions can unlock opportunities to build more equitable and resilient social-ecological systems conducive to the thriving of both people and nature.



POSITIVE FEEDBACK ON THE NON-ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT

Feedback from the working groups on the non-academic process was overwhelmingly positive and considered one of the key impacts of this iteration of SARA. Feedback included:

“Institutionally we have really reflected, especially on the non-academic process - what is impact and how do we engage our audience (and who are they!) and what is our key message - this is a huge learning shift for us we can take back to our colleagues who haven’t been part of SARA.”

“The non-academic products are impressive and help to enhance communication across various groups of people.”

“The non-academic process was putting the idea of bridging science to policy into action.”

“The development of non-academic products was super useful.”

Another SARA member concluded, “The process of producing a NAP has improved the content and narrative of the academic product (rich, valuable, and organic).”

“The non-academic process was more practical than the paper and a much more dynamic process of co-design.”

The lead coordinator of the SARA initiative highlighted, “The importance and potential impact of the non-academic process was a recurring theme in discussions.”



CONCEPTUAL ADVANCEMENTS: FRAMING OF EQUITY AND RESILIENCE

Emerging insights shed light on the intricate relationship between equity and resilience, revealing multifaceted dynamics that influence both the process and outcomes of sustainable development efforts. These insights underscore the following key considerations:

- **The importance of scale and what is considered “in” and “out” of a system:**

Resilience-building efforts must be scrutinized through various scales, recognizing that actions at one scale may have unintended consequences at another, impacting both resilience and equity. Deliberations on system boundaries raise critical questions about what is deemed ‘in’ or ‘out’ of the system. Where and by whom are system boundaries drawn, what impacts are considered at what scales, and what does this mean for building resilience?

The prevalence of informality across multiple dimensions, such as trading, housing, labour, and governance, challenges conventional ideas of system boundaries. The informal is – almost by definition – ‘outside’ of the system or marginalized, even if it represents a majority of people or activities. This prompted reflection on when informality bolsters resilience and when it hampers it. What is the relationship between informality and equity? And should the goal always be to formalize informality?

- **Equity and resilience as processes:**

Equity and resilience are not merely end goals but integral aspects of the development process. This necessitates reflexivity in research and practice, especially in historically problematic contexts like conservation systems. By integrating equity and resilience into the very fabric of decision-making processes, practitioners and policymakers can ensure that these values are not merely outcomes but guiding principles that inform every stage of development initiatives. This discourse was initiated at the first workshop where the following key question was raised:

- Do we consider equity to be a functional and required condition of resilience (i.e. does resilience imply equity), or do we consider

resilience and equity as separate but parallel goals? Does this distinction matter in practice? Working groups took these questions back into their deliberations and synthesis work.

- **Web of relationships:** Understanding resilience and equity as intertwined elements within a complex web of relationships offers a deeper comprehension, extending beyond surface-level connections to encompass power dynamics, gender relations, identity, and belonging. **This holistic perspective acknowledges the interconnectedness of social, economic, and environmental factors and underscores the need for inclusive approaches that address the underlying drivers of vulnerability and marginalization.**

High level of complexity: The intricate interplay of resilience, equity, and sustainability defies simplistic categorisations, posing a challenge to neatly fitting these concepts into frameworks. This complexity necessitates interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches that draw on diverse perspectives and methods to capture the multifaceted nature of social-ecological systems. Furthermore, the acknowledgment that equity and resilience are context-specific underscores the need for contextually grounded strategies that account for the unique socio-cultural, economic, and environmental contexts of different regions. A SARA working group member highlighted, **“We found evidence for a linkage between gender and resilience that’s not well documented in the literature, so we feel our work could have an impact both academically as well as for resilience and adaptation practitioners.”** Another working group member noted, **“A key impact from SARA has been to challenge the conceptualization and translation of resilience to consider equity.”** Participants also commended the collaborative nature of the initiative, with one remarking, “Working on a topic with other groups (essentially eight different angles) was a neat concept.” **The emerging debate around equity as either a prerequisite for resilience or a component thereof adds theoretical depth to discussions on resilience-building strategies.**

LEADERSHIP AND SKILFUL MANAGEMENT OF DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

Leadership and skilful management of diverse perspectives were integral to the success of the SARA initiative. The diverse array of participants, while enriching the dialogue with varied viewpoints, also presented a challenge in terms of aligning disparate perspectives towards common objectives. However, the adept facilitation of the process ensured that this diversity was leveraged as an asset rather than a hindrance. The exceptional

leadership of SARA's coordinators played a pivotal role in navigating these nuances. Particularly noteworthy was their success in striking a delicate balance between providing structure to the initiative while allowing for individual agency and creativity to flourish. This equilibrium fostered an environment conducive to productive collaboration, enabling participants to synergize their diverse perspectives towards achieving shared outcomes.

TRANSDISCIPLINARY SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE CO-PRODUCTION

Critical to SARA was the commitment to examining the complexities of transdisciplinary knowledge co-production. A model was pioneered to orchestrate transdisciplinary working groups, setting a precedent for future initiatives in this domain. The amalgamation of individuals at various career stages and from diverse sectors and geographical regions proved instrumental in fostering a culture of learning and transdisciplinary inquiry. The mix of both academics, practitioners, and practitioner-academics allowed a unique co-production environment where the strengths of each of these groups was equally valued. The interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary dimensions of the endeavour proved immensely valuable, paving the way for a deeper understanding of engaged and impact-oriented research practices that involved stakeholders throughout the research journey.

The working groups, which successfully facilitated the co-production of knowledge, offered the following insights and learnings:

- **Collaborative exchange:** The opportunity for cross-group interaction proved invaluable, allowing for the exchange of ideas and experiences that enriched the collective understanding.
- **Perspective expansion:** Within individual groups, the dynamic interplay of diverse viewpoints challenged participants to reframe their perspectives, leading to innovative approaches to problem-solving.

- **Mutual support:** The mutual assistance extended between groups played a pivotal role, highlighting the importance of collective collaboration in achieving shared goals.
- **Specialisation and generalisation:** The nuanced interplay between specialist expertise and generalist insights illuminated the significance of both convergence and divergence in shaping comprehensive research outcomes.
- **Research-practice integration:** The synergy between researchers and practitioners proved indispensable, not only in shaping the research agenda but also in facilitating effective knowledge translation and application.
- **Diversity enhancement:** The deliberate cultivation of diversity in group connections fostered a rich tapestry of perspectives, enhancing the robustness and inclusivity of the collaborative process.

These reflections underscored the transformative potential of transdisciplinary collaboration, affirming its important role in advancing knowledge co-production and fostering holistic approaches to addressing complex societal challenges.

PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN PRACTITIONERS AND ACADEMICS

The symbiotic relationship between practitioners and academics emerged as a cornerstone of

success within SARA, as reflected upon by participants:

“Often our knowledge isn’t integrated into the scientific or policy sphere, this was a great opportunity as practitioners to have our work integrated into the research process.”

“Bringing science, policy, and practise a bit closer.”

“As a researcher embedded in an implementing organisation, I value the space to be a researcher (to think, to generate, to co-produce, to challenge) and be with people who professionally are more like me.”

“This has also deepened the existing partnerships we had with the folks and organisations in our group.” - Urban Informality and the Urban Food Systems working groups.

“We are starting a global synthesis project (sDiv, Leipzig) on conservation system archetypes and modelling resilience. It is very much driven by SARA discussions. Engagements with practitioners will happen over the long term.”

“Built a lot of interest in science communication.”

“Practitioners really valued the engagement - especially the opportunity to think and work on an academic product. Researchers enjoyed the NAP.”

“SARA’s format has helped us design our Climate Adaptation Research Programme (CARP) as well as seed grant opportunities at our university.”

These testimonials emphasize the collaborative spirit and mutual benefits derived from the fruitful partnerships forged between practitioners and academics. Such collaborations not only facilitated

the integration of diverse perspectives but also fostered innovation and cross-pollination of ideas, ultimately enriching the research and practice landscape.



Recommendations for future initiatives

Recommendations were given for future science, practice and policy initiatives based on the lessons learnt during the working group initiative of SARA.



Early Engagement to Refine the Role and Policy Application of Non-Academic Products

It was recommended that future initiatives place greater emphasis on initiating the non-academic process from the outset, refining the role and policy application of non-academic products. This involves integrating non-academic stakeholders into the working groups early in the process, including actively engaging practitioners, policymakers, and representatives from relevant organisations. Resources should be allocated not only to support the creation of non-academic products but also to facilitate their dissemination

and measure their impact effectively. One suggested approach is to encourage working groups to directly engage with organisational leadership to gather feedback on the utility of the non-academic products and how they can be tailored to meet the needs of the target audience. Additionally, developing the NAP with a clear impact pathway can enhance its attractiveness to potential funders, ensuring sustainability beyond the initial initiative.

ENGAGE AND PROVIDE STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS SUPPORT FOR THE NAP

To effectively execute the outputs of diverse academic-practitioner teams, strategic planning for the NAP is essential. This involves developing a comprehensive plan outlining how the NAP will be produced, disseminated, and monitored for impact. Additionally, seeking communications support can enhance the visibility and effectiveness of the

collective outputs by ensuring they are presented cohesively under a unified project brand. By leveraging strategic communications expertise, the initiative can maximize the reach and influence of its NAP, ultimately enhancing their impact on target audiences.

TARGET A WIDER POLICY PROCESS

Future initiatives should aim to broaden the scope of their non-academic engagement efforts by targeting wider policy processes, such as United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties (COP) side events. By participating in such forums, initiatives can facilitate cross-learning

opportunities with stakeholders from other regions and contribute to global policy dialogues on relevant issues. This expanded reach can amplify the impact of the initiative's NAP, fostering knowledge exchange and collaboration on a broader scale.





Enhance the academic process

Future initiatives should prioritize enhancing the academic process by continuing the “friendly review” process which was highly popular. This could be further strengthened by facilitating more frequent, smaller inter-group discussions. For instance, introducing paired group discussions, where teams meet virtually prior to workshops to

exchange peer feedback, share challenges, and explore opportunities, can foster a collaborative and supportive academic environment. This approach encourages interdisciplinary learning and promotes the exchange of diverse perspectives, ultimately enriching the quality of academic outputs.

INCREASED SYNTHESIS AND JOINT EVENTS

To further promote knowledge integration and cross-group learning, future initiatives should undertake a meta-synthesis to consolidate insights from all working groups. This meta-synthesis should culminate in the development of a comprehensive synthesis product that goes beyond traditional editorial formats, enabling a holistic examination of key themes and findings across groups. Additionally, organizing joint conference participation as has been done in the first iteration of SARA through a session at the [Programme on Ecosystem Change and Society \(PECS\) 3 conference on “pathways to sustainability”](#). This offers a valuable opportunity to convene participants from all working groups, providing a platform for sharing learnings with a broader community. By facilitating joint events and synthesis efforts, initiatives can maximize the impact of their academic outputs and foster a culture of collaborative learning and knowledge exchange.

“The opportunity to get together and think through and develop an academic product, really excited practitioners. To join in on writing papers and the value of knowledge co-production.”
- Practitioner



Working group set-up and workshops

To optimize the effectiveness of workshops and working group activities, several recommendations were proposed. It was suggested that workshops should incorporate field visits tailored to the focal areas of the respective working groups. These visits would provide valuable first-hand insights and enhance understanding of research needs within specific contexts. Additionally, there is a need for further opportunities for cross-group engagement and collaboration. One suggestion to facilitate this is to support the inclusion of post doctorates or interns, funded by micro-grants, who can contribute to maintaining momentum and advancing initiatives between formal meetings.

Facilitated group interactions and engagement opportunities

- Enhancing opportunities for working groups to interact and collaborate is essential for fostering cross-learning and knowledge exchange. Several strategies can be employed to achieve this goal, including: Pairing groups from the outset to encourage mutual support, peer feedback, and collaboration throughout the process.
- Hosting virtual meetings on a regular basis, such as establishing a community of practice platform or holding online check-ins between face-to-face meetings. These virtual sessions could provide opportunities for groups to present their progress, share insights, and address challenges.
- Exploring co-production opportunities, where working groups collaborate on developing a meta-product or series of products that synthesize their collective findings and insights.
- Establishing a quarterly newsletter or similar communication channel to disseminate updates, share learnings, and facilitate ongoing engagement among working group members.

By implementing these strategies, future initiatives can create an environment conducive to meaningful collaboration, knowledge sharing, and collective impact across diverse groups and stakeholders.

SOCIAL CAPITAL: THE KEY TO SUCCESSFUL WORKING GROUPS

The building of social capital and the establishment of principles of respect within working groups were identified as invaluable components of the collaborative process. Feedback from group members highlighted the transformative nature of working with individuals from diverse backgrounds:

“The structure was really collaborative, not hierarchical, and inclusive. Everyone seemed to find a way to contribute substantially, despite differences in obligations outside SARA work that (for example) limited time they could invest on the SARA activities. I really enjoyed the sense of mutual respect and openness to learning from others. None of us are experts in the topic, we all have complementary knowledge and experiences to draw from.”

Some working groups encountered the challenge that not all members contributed as expected. While it is tempting to dismiss such situations as typical in group work, this experience highlights the importance of full commitment from all members for the success of the collaborative endeavour. When all members commit fully, it positively impacts the entire process and improves the resulting products. This was evident in groups that fostered collaboration, generativity, and active participation from all members. Setting up regular online meetings proved beneficial in ensuring ongoing engagement. For future initiatives, it might be worth considering implementing a working group contract or similar mechanisms to encourage full commitment from all members from the outset. This proactive approach could enhance the effectiveness and inclusivity of future iterations of the initiative.

“Amazing process to be part of, I learnt so much and made some lifelong friends!!”

INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY OF WORKING GROUPS

The success of the process was attributed to the diversity and composition of the working groups, which facilitated rich and multifaceted discussions. Moving forward, it is imperative to prioritize inclusion and diversity within working groups by ensuring representation from various backgrounds and perspectives. To achieve this, future initiatives should aim to include a mix of early-career and senior researchers, striking a balance between researchers, practitioners, and policy developers, as a key achievement of the current SARA initiative.

Additionally, the inclusion of representatives from local communities and government bodies, as well as engagement with private sector or industry partners, is crucial for fostering comprehensive and holistic discussions. Moreover, efforts should be made to diversify the regional representation within working groups, addressing the overrepresentation of certain countries, in this case South Africa, while ensuring equitable participation from other regions (e.g., lusophone and francophone countries).

MANAGING THE SOCIAL PROCESSES OF WORKING GROUPS

Efficiently managing the social dynamics within working groups is crucial for fostering collaboration and maximizing productivity. While providing upfront clarity on conceptual frameworks and

process expectations can be beneficial, it is important to recognize the diverse perspectives and backgrounds of participants. Upfront clarity on roles and responsibilities can help streamline the

initial stages of collaboration and mitigate potential misunderstandings or delays. However, a balanced approach is needed to accommodate participants with varying levels of familiarity with academic backgrounds. Overly prescribing methodologies from the beginning may risk imposing certain viewpoints and limiting the creative exchange of ideas. Instead, it is essential to strike a balance between providing structure and allowing flexibility to accommodate diverse perspectives and encourage organic collaboration.

Additionally, leveraging the existing foundation and experiences from previous initiatives can enhance future iterations of SARA. Building upon the lessons learned and established structures can accelerate progress, minimize duplication of efforts, and ensure continuity in achieving the overarching objectives of the programme. By refining and enhancing existing processes and approaches, SARA can optimize its effectiveness and maximize its impact in addressing complex challenges related to resilience and equity in Southern Africa.

INCREASING LEARNING AND EXCHANGE BETWEEN GROUPS

To build upon successful practices observed in SARA and foster a deeper level of inter-group learning and synthesis, it is essential to continue implementing structured mechanisms for facilitated peer-to-peer exchanges. Throughout workshops, leveraging smaller, mixed groups within working groups to engage in dialogue on common themes and share insights and perspectives proved effective in SARA. These smaller group discussions allowed for intimate and impactful interactions and focused exploration of shared challenges and opportunities.

session, can further promote cross-group learning and collaboration. Following these presentations, the development of a blog for ongoing reflection and discussion can sustain the momentum of learning and knowledge exchange beyond the workshops, enabling participants to continue sharing insights and experiences. Moreover, formal mentoring sessions could be implemented to provide valuable guidance and support to early career working group members, enhancing their learning and professional development within the programme.

Additionally, organizing workshops where all groups have the opportunity to present their findings to each other, such as through a poster

Working group members expressed the benefits of increased learning and exchanges in the following ways:





Regional focus

While the regional focus on Southern Africa has proven beneficial in establishing a transdisciplinary network of researchers and practitioners, there is a recognized need to enhance representation from all countries in the region. Diversifying the participation to include more group members from a broader range of Southern African countries can enrich the perspectives and insights shared within the programme, fostering a more comprehensive understanding of regional challenges and opportunities. Maintaining the regional focus on Southern Africa is crucial as it aligns with the focus of many non-governmental

organizations (NGOs) and government initiatives, facilitating collaboration and coordination with existing regional efforts. Furthermore, the regional emphasis ensures access to localized expertise and contextual knowledge, which is essential for conducting effective reviews and developing contextually relevant solutions and interventions. By broadening participation to encompass a more diverse array of Southern African countries, SARA can enhance its impact and relevance across the region, fostering greater inclusivity and representation within its interdisciplinary network.



Resourcing and funding

Some of the suggested recommendations in this section would require a significant increase in co-ordination and technical support time, which would be a different approach in the financing and structure of the programme. Adequate funding is crucial to cover the time required for writing, coordination, and stakeholder engagement beyond the working groups which needs to be structured in the working group composition and requires a competent working group lead to both convene and set clear expectations and boundaries amongst selected working group members. As highlighted by one working group member, “not

everyone had the same time availability to work on SARA, especially since it didn’t cover any staff time. For me it was sometimes difficult to justify spending time away from my funded projects for SARA, and I had to consider using leave to attend workshops.” In a future iteration of SARA, additional support needs could look at areas for additional expenses related to data collection and stakeholder engagement efforts. This underscore bringing in a mix of academics and practitioners does create a difference in the ability to ‘map their time’ to the initiative and ability to fully engage.



Fostering networks

To strengthen networking efforts, the next iteration of SARA should begin with stakeholder mapping to identify key partners and organizations. Leveraging existing contacts, SARA can build connections with relevant groups like Adaptation Futures and The Global Landscape Forum. Additionally, brainstorming sessions are needed to devise practical strategies

for sustaining community engagement post-programme. This might involve online platforms, virtual meetings, and mentorship programmes to facilitate ongoing collaboration and knowledge exchange. These efforts will enhance the impact and legacy of SARA within the resilience and sustainability community.



Monitoring and tracking the impact of the knowledge

Integrating active monitoring, evaluation and joint learning into the working group engagements was a suggested additional process for assessing the effectiveness of future SARA initiatives. M&E experts who are part of the working groups, could play a dual role, facilitating the engagement process while conducting their own study on the transdisciplinary process, making their output the M&E framework for the entire project. Integrating an M&E component within each working group to facilitate the assessment and refinement of group processes and outcomes emerged as a valuable practice in SARA for promoting meta-learning. By optimizing effectiveness and impact through continuous assessment and refinement, M&E can play a pivotal role in enhancing the overall success of the programme. Conducting a meta-evaluation of SARA would offer valuable insights for ongoing improvement. To gauge the impact of the knowledge generated, it is imperative to engage with recipients and understand how they utilize it in their respective contexts. This feedback loop could inform similar initiatives and enhance the programme's overall effectiveness.





ANNEX 1

ABOUT THE WORKING GROUPS



Figure 5: [Detailed information on each work group is detailed on their individual page, including access to their research outputs and blogs](#)

BUILDING EQUITABLE AND RESILIENT URBAN FOOD SYSTEMS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

The ‘Building Equitable and Resilient Urban Food Systems in Southern Africa’ working group addressed the complex challenges within urban food systems in the region. Characterized by a hybrid mix of formal and informal food retailers, urban agriculture, and food sharing, these systems are diverse but often fail to ensure food security for low- to middle-income urban households. Economic pressures from the COVID-19 pandemic, food price shocks linked to disruptions in food supply chains, and the impacts of climate variability contribute to high rates of food insecurity. To mitigate these pressures on the urban food system, the working group adopted an urban food systems approach that extended beyond agricultural production, embracing the diversity of urban food environments. By assessing the resilience and equity of urban food systems in Zambia and Southern Africa, the group aimed to identify strategic urban planning opportunities that promoted resilience and equitable access to food for households in the region.

Working group members included:

- Allan Chilenga, Ministry of Agriculture (Zambia), Zambia Agriculture Research Institute
- Dorcas Kabuya, Ministry of Agriculture (Zambia), National Agricultural Information Services (NAIS)
- Julia Davies, Arizona Institute for Resilience, University of Arizona
- Corrie Hannah, Arizona Institute for Resilience, University of Arizona
- Jordan Blekking, Department of Global Development, Cornell University
- Jane Battersby, Environmental and Geographical Science Department, University of Cape Town
- Percy Toriro, University of Zimbabwe

HARNESSING THE POWER OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION FOR EQUITABLE RESILIENCE

The working group on 'Harnessing the Power of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) for Equitable Resilience' recognized that often project design and M&E within development work are primarily driven by funder requirements. This limits the involvement and capacity of project beneficiaries, hindering their say in implementation and evaluation. The conventional approach to M&E, as currently practiced, falls short in contributing to long-term sustainability and equitable resilience, despite its substantial potential. This working group, consisting of six practitioner-researchers from across South Africa, provided a unique space for reflection and co-creation. By synthesising 'voices from practice', the group aimed to redefine how M&E practitioners can utilise their methods to actively contribute to building equity and resilience, emphasising the importance of incorporating beneficiary perspectives and needs.

Working group members included:

- Karen Kotschy, Association for Water and Rural Development and Environmental Learning Research Centre, Rhodes University
- Ancois de Villiers, Department of Conservation Ecology and Entomology, Stellenbosch University and Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology, Leiden University
- Paul Mvulane, Environmental Learning Research Centre, Rhodes University
- Sue Soal, Independent facilitator, evaluator, and organisational process consultant
- Glenda Raven, Independent consultant, Learning for Change
- Michelle Hiestermann, Water Research Commission, now at the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

INFORMALITY AND EQUITABLE URBAN RESILIENCE

The 'Informality and Equitable Urban Resilience' working group focused on the pervasive role of informality in shaping urban life in the Global South, particularly in Southern Africa. Despite its significant impact on urban dynamics, the connection between informality, urban inequality, and resilience is often overlooked in contemporary urban planning. This neglect poses a risk of perpetuating disparities and hindering effective responses to crises and climate-related shocks. To address this gap, the working group's goal was to synthesize research and practices from Southern Africa and other Global South contexts, comprehensively examining how informality influences urban resilience.

Drawing on interdisciplinary expertise in climate change adaptation, social-ecological resilience, urban governance, social movements, and environmental justice, the group aimed to formulate recommendations for enhanced urban planning and governance in Southern African cities and beyond. With representatives from organisations closely engaged with urban communities and decision-makers across Southern Africa, including ICLEI Africa (Local Governments for Sustainability) and Slum Dwellers International, the working group's insights bridged the gap between research and on-the-ground experience, enhancing the practical relevance of their work.

Working group members included:

- Hallie Eakin, School of Sustainability, Arizona State University
- Gina Ziervogel, African Climate and Development Initiative, University of Cape Town
- Maike Hamann, Centre for Sustainability Transitions, Stellenbosch University and Centre for Geography and Environmental Science, University of Exeter
- Martha Sibanda, Slum Dwellers International
- Ernita van Wyk, ICLEI Africa – Local Governments for Sustainability
- Jade Sullivan, ICLEI Africa – Local Governments for Sustainability
- Nadine Methner, African Climate and Development Initiative, University of Cape Town
- Johan Enqvist, African Climate and Development Initiative, University of Cape Town and Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University

EQUITABLE RESILIENCE IN SOUTHERN AFRICAN CONSERVATION SYSTEMS

Southern Africa, with a longstanding legacy in global conservation, presents a diverse array of innovative and transformative conservation models. Despite this leadership, a critical gap exists in synthesising lessons on comprehending, assessing, and building resilience across these diverse models. This working group addressed the challenge by convening diverse Southern African researchers and practitioners spanning various knowledge domains. The group conducted a global synthesis of equitable resilience in natural resource systems, applying these insights to enhance understanding of equitable resilience specifically in Southern Africa. Their approach heavily relied on collaboration with scientists-practitioners possessing profound and practical insights into conservation management and governance within Southern African systems. Through a strategic dissemination plan, encompassing academic publications, policy briefs, and consultation with conservation agencies, the working group sought to provide both global intellectual leadership and practical policy support, contributing to the advancement of resilience-building initiatives throughout Southern Africa.

Working group members included:

- Alta De Vos, Centre for Sustainability Transitions, Stellenbosch University
- Dirk Roux, South African National Parks
- Hayley Clements, for Sustainability Transitions, Stellenbosch University
- Nelsiwe Mpapane, Nelson Mandela University
- Bekezela Nxumalo, Stellenbosch University
- Hervé Fritz, Nelson Mandela University
- Edson Gandiwa, Scientific Services, Zimbabwe National Parks,
- Graeme Cumming, University of Western Australia
- Chloe Guerbois, Nelson Mandela University
- Tess Parker, Rhodes University

ENHANCING EQUITY AND RESILIENCE IN AN INTERCONNECTED WORLD

This working group, comprising researchers and practitioners, employed a ‘metacoupling’ framework to analyse the intricate dimensions of (in)equity within three Southern African case studies linked to export horticultural value chains and transboundary fisheries. Understanding how resources are accessed and distributed in a place, for instance, is often seen as mainly influenced by local laws, norms, and governance decisions, but external factors such as global market dynamics can have a significant influence as well. The concept of ‘metacoupling’ addresses the interconnections and interdependencies of social-ecological systems across multiple scales, including local, adjacent, and global levels. This helps to understand complex relationships and reveals sources of power that can create inequalities by limiting access to resources and opportunities. The working group’s approach shed light on the power dynamics and disparities embedded in the value chains of agricultural commodities and fisheries traded between local and global systems. By emphasising cross-scale connections, the working group aimed to unveil critical intervention points for fostering resilience and equity, empowering local actors within an increasingly interconnected global landscape.

Working group members included:

- Nadia Sitas, Centre for Sustainability Transitions, Stellenbosch University, South Africa and SouthSouthNorth, South Africa
- Odirilwe Selomane, Department of Agricultural Economics, Extension and Rural Development, University of Pretoria, South Africa
- Catherine Pringle, Centre for Sustainability Transitions, Stellenbosch University, South Africa
- Lutendo Mugwedi, Department of Geography & Environmental Sciences, University of Venda, South Africa
- Britta Hackenberg, Namibia Nature Foundation, Namibia
- Willem Malherbe, Centre for Sustainability Transitions, Stellenbosch University, South Africa

SEEDING EQUITY IN AFRICAN FOOD SYSTEMS

This working group emerged from a recognition that mainstream practices based on dominant paradigms are unlikely to foster the changes required for more equitable systems. Using a food systems lens, the working group investigated the role of marginal, experimental, or bottom-up initiatives in fostering equity. The group focused on how these innovative initiatives, referred to as “seeds,” could enhance different dimensions of equity: procedural, recognitional, and distributional. To this end, the working group identified and studied seed-initiatives aimed at transforming food systems from multiple countries across Africa. The study sheds insight into the diversity of activities undertaken by these initiatives, and how these activities interact with various dimensions of equity. The study also highlights the barriers these initiatives face in achieving their combined equity and sustainability goals, and the strategies they employ to overcome those barriers. Drawing from these outcomes, the working group offers suggestions on how development funders and investors can better support seed initiatives in achieving impact and creating more equitable systems.

Working group members included:

- Julia van Velden, Centre for Sustainability Transitions, Stellenbosch University
- Nyasha Magadzire, Centre for Sustainability Transitions, Stellenbosch University
- Reinette (Oonsie) Biggs, Centre for Sustainability Transitions, Stellenbosch University and Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University
- Laura Pereira, Global Change Institute, Wits University and Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University
- Joyce Ojino, Global Change Institute, Wits University
- Willem Malherbe, Centre for Sustainability Transitions, Stellenbosch University

DISASTER RISK: TOWARDS EQUITABLE RESILIENCE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

This working group critically examined the concept of resilience, which has faced criticism for its oversight of differential vulnerability and neglect of issues related to social justice, equity, and inclusion. In response, equitable resilience has emerged as a vital notion recognising that vulnerabilities and capacities are unevenly distributed in societies. With a notable increase in disaster-related events in Southern Africa, there is a pressing need for a nuanced understanding of achieving equity, particularly among the most affected. However, research on equitable resilience has predominantly originated from high-income countries, leaving a gap in its conceptualisation within the context of developing countries, specifically the Global South. This project aimed to bridge the gap by engaging in a series of activities, including an advanced mixed-methods pilot study that utilized group concept mapping. Through these endeavours, the aim was to holistically explore equitable resilience in a contextually grounded manner, shedding light on the construct within the specific context of Southern Africa (SADC).

Working group members included:

- Regardt 'Reggie' Ferreira, Tulane University Disaster Resilience Leadership Academy, Consortium for Equitable Disaster Resilience
- Tim Davidson, Consortium for Equitable Disaster Resilience
- Alice Ncube, Disaster Management Training and Education Centre for Africa, University of the Free State
- Anita Padmanabhanunni, Department of Psychology, University of the Western Cape
- Cameron Leahy, Tulane University Disaster Resilience Leadership Academy
- Collins Okolie, Disaster Management Training and Education Centre for Africa, University of the Free State
- Brendon D. Faraa, Department of Psychology, University of the Western Cape

INTEGRATION OF GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES FOR EQUITABLE AND RESILIENT LIVELIHOODS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Gender transformative approaches (GTAs) are crucial in development, humanitarian, and conservation work due to converging global threats like climate change, biodiversity loss, and conflict, which disproportionately affect women and girls, particularly in developing economies. Evidence reveals significant gender differences in resilience capacities and preferences for addressing these challenges, making gender transformation—ensuring equal rights for men and women—essential for resilient development. This process involves evaluating and redistributing power, and addressing inequalities perpetuated by social norms, societal dynamics, and institutional control, which significantly influence vulnerability and responses to shocks and stressors. The working group of researchers, advocates, and practitioners used a gender equality framework to examine resilience, the role of gender transformation in resilience building, and its contribution to equitable livelihoods among small-scale farmers in Southern Africa. Through reflection, synthesis, and narrative-building, they demonstrated the practical value of integrating GTAs into programmes and practices, identifying key pathways to achieving equitable and resilient livelihoods in an increasingly insecure world.

Working group members included:

- Caitlin Shannon, CARE
- Christine Lamanna, World Agroforestry Centre - ICRAF
- Amanda West, CARE
- Chikondi Chabvuta, CARE
- Ellen Matupi Rural Women's Assembly, Malawi
- Karl Deering, CARE
- Patience Mgoli-Mwale, CARE
- Sithembile Mwamakamba, Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN)
- Thokozani Kalanje, University College Cork



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