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1 Acknowledgments

The Adaptation Research Alliance (ARA) Secretariat would like to acknowledge its host organisation (SouthSouthNorth), the time and input of ARA members into the iteration and design of the website, as well as the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) for their input on the strategy and direction of the Tracking, Learning and Sharing workstream, which underpins the Tracking Learning and Sharing Platform.

2 Executive summary

The ARA is a global coalition across the adaptation research and action communities, bringing together researchers and both traditional ‘research funders’ and ‘action funders’.

Following its well-received launch at COP26 in November 2021, the ARA has grown membership significantly and has a need to raise awareness of the Alliance in general, its commitments, who comprises its membership, and how new members/partners can engage with it. The ARA also has an urgent need to facilitate and support knowledge sharing among and within its membership in order to deliver on its goals of driving inclusivity, innovation, collaboration, and increased investment in action-oriented research for adaptation. This extends not just to sharing existing materials or published works, but also includes the ARA supporting collaboration on projects, programmes, and publications that are currently being developed or designed. These needs will be met efficiently and with excellence with the launch of a new public website and community sharing platform (Tracking, Learning and Sharing Platform).

The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) has been supporting the ARA in the process to build and maintain an integrated website, knowledge base and communication platform for the support of the Tracking, Learning and Sharing (TLS) activities within the ARA Secretariat. This process, as outlined below and based thereon, have been designed in detail in collaboration between ACIAR and the ARA.

The objectives of this project were to convert the research synthesis previously conducted (by IIED as part of the ARA Secretariat) into a design for the Tracking, Learning and Sharing platform through the following activities:

- Develop and launch the TLS platform
- Enable the initial operation of the platform to provide a foundation for future research/evaluation of its effectiveness at facilitating multi-stakeholder large-scale shared learning

The outcome of these objectives will eventually result in more effective, increased collaboration and partnership within the climate adaptation community which, in turn, will create better adaptation measures and initiatives. In particular, ARA members will be able to work together on projects, using the Members Area with an integrated Slack platform, which will improve communication and as a result, collaboration amongst the ARA community. At this current point, the TLS platform has been developed and launched, with an integrated public area, Members Area and Slack platform to enable the outcomes of these objectives to be achieved in the long term.

3 Background

The ARA is a global collaborative effort to catalyze increased investment and capacity for action-oriented research that supports effective adaptation to climate change – primarily in developing countries – at the scale and urgency demanded by the science. One key activity area of the ARA is the Tracking, Learning and Sharing, which aims at facilitating a knowledge exchange between all members, as well as tracking their efforts that are in line with the ARA mission. In specific, the activity area shall:

1. Track member progress toward the achievement of the outcomes detailed in the ARA Theory of Change.
2. Actively learn about what works and what does not when designing, conducting, and delivering action-oriented research on climate change adaptation.
3. Share learning with each other and with other stakeholders in the adaptation community.

To achieve these goals, the ARA Secretariat was tasked to design and establish systems for tracking the progress of the ARA, its members and partners and to learn from their experiences, to share their knowledge and to learn from one another, and to share progress and expert experience with external stakeholders.

4 Objectives

The objectives of the TLS platform are as follows:

- The ARA and its members actively learn from their experience of designing, conducting and delivering action-oriented research for adaptation and resilience.
- Policy makers and practitioners actively uptake and apply learning generated within the ARA to improve the performance of their adaptation and resilience-building initiatives.
- ARA members track their progress in contributing to the ARA outcomes and applying the Adaptation Research for Impact Principles in their work.
- ARA Secretariat tracks and reports the progress of the Alliance and uses tracking data to adjust and improve the approach of the Alliance and its members for conducting and using action-oriented research for adaptation and resilience.

Additionally, the TLS platform and its implementation supports the following ARA outcomes:

- Capacity built at individual and institutional levels.
- Enhanced learning and improved research uptake in implementation.
- Strengthened collaboration across countries, disciplines, and scales.

5 Methodology

The overall goal of building the Tracking, Learning and Sharing platform was to conceptualize, build, implement, maintain and run a software system that supports the Tracking, Learning and Sharing (TLS) activity area of the ARA. Simply put, this platform is the central “hub” for all information related to the ARA, the work of its members, and the connection between members.

The process to develop the platform is based on a strong community-focused, collaborative approach considering the ARA Secretariat and the Alliance members. During the whole project runtime and the initial consultations, decisions around the platform architecture were taken collaboratively with the ARA Secretariat with consultations held with 18 ARA members with specific expertise and knowledge on similar platforms. The ARA encouraged collaborators to bring in suggestions and ideas that contributed to an improved platform and as such, an improved interaction between the ARA community and an increased TLS-impact.

The platform has been subject to variations based on insights and suggestions of the ARA Secretariat and will continue these iterations in response to feedback from ARA members as they use the platform in real-time. Thus, an open communication approach was established at the start of the project, which is carried out throughout its duration, including regular updates and joint decision making where relevant.

The overall TLS platform has four distinct use cases. While it was part of the project to define the technological architecture of the platform, it was also important that all use cases were linked in functionality and user experience as well as possible. The following are the current use cases which were considered:

- **Public website:** static content organised and curated by the ARA Secretariat
- **Public knowledge repository:** contributions from all ARA members, moderated and curated by the ARA Secretariat
- **Internal knowledge base:** dynamic content that is for internal sharing of documentation of all types within the ARA
- **Internal engagement and collaboration:** channels for communication and collaboration tools for joint efforts within the ARA

The user interface, user experience and design of each part of the system was created to be as user-friendly and accessible as possible, and password-controlled areas are accessible with one single login.

As there are many websites and platforms in existence that have information and knowledge relevant to the TLS goals, the platform as much as possible aims to reduce duplication of content and efforts, and actively seeks to collaborate with those with similar platforms with the intention of strengthening the offerings of both. It does this by not only making knowledge available but also facilitating collaboration and engagement among those utilizing this information. It also supports integration with existing platforms like weAdapt and the Resilience Platform, encouraging broader collaboration and reducing the likelihood of repetition.

This project was conceptualised as a collaborative approach to building an engagement platform for ARA members. As such, it relied heavily on the expertise of the ARA’s diverse membership in the conceptualisation, design, and iterations of improvement.

To this end, several stakeholder engagement workshops were held including:

- **Discovery workshops:** 2x digital workshops exploring wants, needs, and like to haves of the TLS platform with 7 members including representatives from the

Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN), IIED, and the Universidad del Rosario.

- **Website functionality workshop:** collaborative review of website design, architecture, and user experience with 10 members including representatives from the Global Resilience Partnership (GRP), ODI, and the Université Nationale d'Agriculture du Benin.
- **Members Area demo workshop:** collaborative review of Members Area (TLS) design, architecture, and user experience with the ARA Secretariat.
- **Members Area user feedback workshop:** collaborative review of Members Area (TLS) incorporating wider feedback on functionality and user experience in development involving the ARA Secretariat and members representing the ARA geographic spread and including the International Platform on Adaptation Metrics (IPAM) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

6 Achievements against activities and outputs/milestones

This project was carried out generally according to the projected project plan, with very little deviation from the predicted timeline. However, there were unforeseen development challenges during the final stages of development, which required an adjustment in final delivery on making the website live.

These delays also impacted the launch of the membership engagement area, requiring that final workshop dates (such as the Members Area user feedback workshop) were pushed out.

The formal launch and the announcement of the website and TLSP platform has also been delayed, in order to ensure that full ARA membership is given the opportunity to review and comment on the site in its pilot stages. While this means that news and other communications around the product will come later than expected, it ensures that the website and platform is as user-friendly as possible, and that its public launch will be accompanied by advocates from within the ARA who will champion its uptake and use.

Objective 1: To collaboratively develop a website & TLS platform

no.	activity	outputs/ milestones	completion date
1.1	Project planning	Planning, research, Stakeholder engagements (2x workshops)	29 May 2022
1.2	Site architecture	Site architecture & Sitemap, Wireframing/Prototyping	30 June 2022
1.3	Brand & styles	Styles, branding, visual approach	4 July 2022
1.4	Web design	Style tiles, page design, imagery	29 July 2022
1.5	Development	Website development	10 October 2022
1.6	Review	Site review & error testing	7 October 2022
1.7	Live site	Site made public	4 November 2022
1.8	Stakeholder engagement	Website design, flow & Members Area (TLS) functionality	22 November 2022
1.9	Design & development	Implementing Members Area (TLS) functionality and look & feel, including a stakeholder workshop with the ARA Secretariat	1 December 2022

Objective 2: To launch a functioning TLS platform that supports engagement, collaboration, & knowledge sharing

no.	activity	outputs/ milestones	completion date
2.1	Members Area platform live	Members Area (TLS) platform launched and live	13 December
2.2	Testing	TLS functionality review & error testing	16 December

2.3	Feedback workshops	Following the launch of the TLSP Platform, there will be further stakeholder engagement sessions focused on improving functionality & building buy-in	January –June 2023
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PC = partner country, A = Australia

7 Key results and discussion

The following key results have been achieved with this project.

7.1 Tracking Learning and Sharing Platform

The website is used as an informational source to researchers, policy makers and practitioners working on climate adaptation and resilience but will also inform the general public about the ARA. It is composed of the following pages:

- About us
- What we do
- Membership
- News & Events
- Resources

7.2 TLS Public Knowledge Repository

The knowledge repository is a public facing platform that is used to showcase all ARA-related content from the ARA Secretariat and all Alliance members. This content will mostly be learning products from projects, knowledge products that are shared by members as well as blog posts.

The repository shall be able to use keywords/tags (for category, type, region and a comprehensive list of specific tags) for the content published, as well as have a clear indication of author and a geographic location when relevant. Based on these meta data, the repository shall allow for a refined search mechanism (keyword selection and full-text search).

It is expected that this repository will integrate seamlessly with the internal knowledge base, with the option of the ARA Secretariat to set the visibility of individual items to public (after approval from the authors).

The public repository also allows an easy way to link or embed select content in the ARA website for publicity. Since the launch of the knowledge repository, 197 people have already reviewed the resources page, and there have been 3500 views overall.

7.3 TLS Internal Knowledge Base

The TLS knowledge base is intended to enable communication and collaboration across ARA members, thus speaking to the ARA's outcome of strengthening collaboration across countries, disciplines and scale.

Due to the set-up of the ARA and its learning processes, it is important that documentation about projects, workstreams, efforts, and learnings from within the ARA Secretariat and members can be shared and stored for access within the ARA Members Area. Documents and other media can be stored, retrieved and tagged with a broad search not only on context but also meta-data (tags, contributors, related organisations, geographic location, etc.). In addition to text files and media, documents in this context can also be articles, blog posts, news, and similar that can be directly posted to the portal.

Due to the global reach as well as the thematic breadth of the ARA, it is envisaged to allow for 'subspaces' for a variety of subgroups of interest ("working groups"). The platform supports such a subgroup environment, either by nested grouping (all the content shall still be visible in the global knowledge base) or smart tagging and filtering.

The knowledge base also acts as a directory of organisations, people, and projects within the ARA, whereby people can view the profile of the users working on the platform, and

then can be interlinked with other entities (organisation, project, content). The ARA directory allows for discovery of each of these in a faceted search.

7.4 TLS Online Engagement and Collaboration Space

Due to the nature of the ARA, decentralized communication between all members and with the ARA Secretariat is crucial. As such, the TLS platform needs a way to allow all participants to collaborate and communicate with each other in synchronous and asynchronous ways and jointly work on documents and media. The engagement and collaboration space shall include the following functionality as a minimum:

- Voice and video conferencing for planned and ad-hoc online interactions for peer-to-peer learning; in the best case allows for hybrid events to tie the virtual and physical meeting spaces together
- Chat/discussions with direct messaging and group messaging (can take many forms). Past messages need to be accessible and potentially can be organized by thematic threads. Here the use of Slack is planned. This will allow for member-to-member collaborations as well as working groups for specific tasks and outputs. Communication and engagement between the secretariat and members will also happen here.
- Collaborative distributed working (similar to real-time collaboration in MS Teams or Google Workspaces) for jointly creating and editing documents, presentations, etc.

8 Impacts

The TLS platform is expected to have long-term impacts in several areas. Presently, as the TLS platform has only just been launched, the impacts can only be assumed. Going forward, the ARA predicts that the following impacts will result, and will therefore evaluate the effectiveness of the platform against the following points:

8.1 Scientific impacts – now and in 5 years

New tools, approaches, methods, and frameworks for enhancing adaptation effectiveness are elicited through collaboration between ARA members and the global community of practice working on adaptation.

8.2 Capacity impacts – now and in 5 years

Capacity for undertaking and using action-oriented research that develops local adaptation and resilience solutions in developing countries is increased as a result of enhanced knowledge sharing and learning between ARA members and the global community of practice working on adaptation

8.3 Community impacts – now and in 5 years

Climate risks for the most vulnerable people are reduced and their resilience built through the generation and application of new knowledge and practice as a result of collaboration between ARA members and the global community of practice working on adaptation.

8.3.1 Economic impacts

Climate risks for the most vulnerable people are reduced and their resilience to climate induced economic shocks and stresses is built through the generation and application of new knowledge and practice through collaboration between ARA members and the global community of practice working on adaptation.

8.3.2 Social impacts

Climate risks for the most vulnerable people are reduced and their resilience to climate induced social shocks and stresses is built through the generation and application of new knowledge and practice through collaboration between ARA members and the global community of practice working on adaptation.

8.3.3 Environmental impacts

Climate risks for the most vulnerable people are reduced and their resilience to climate induced environmental shocks and stresses is built through the generation of new knowledge and practice through collaboration between ARA members and the global community of practice working on adaptation.

8.4 Communication and dissemination activities

The ARA Secretariat announced the website and TLS platform at [COP27](#). Launch of the website was also shared during an *ARA:60 Minutes!* session.

To support member engagement and enable a high uptake of the platform, the ARA is producing a robust how-to guide to help members navigate the process of uploading and sharing information, and how to identify and recruit the right project collaborators.

A short introduction video on the TLS platform and how to effectively engage on it will also be produced. This is a visual overview aimed at facilitating a clear sense of ownership among members of the TLS platform and to support a widespread understanding of how to effectively use the platform.

The ARA will also hold two how-to workshops aimed at introducing the TLS platform and its capabilities to members, one by June 2023 and the other in the second half of 2023. It will also integrate its regular activities and webinars on the platform.

Plans to publicly announce the website and platform are scheduled for early 2023, including several publicly available blog articles, social media posts, and newsletter announcements.

9 Conclusions and recommendations

9.1 Conclusions

The Adaptation Research Alliance's Tracking, Learning and Sharing platform is key to the Alliance's mission of accelerating and scaling investments in action-oriented research in developing countries, that addresses the pressing knowledge needs for adaptation and resilience of the most vulnerable, building capacity at all stages from research to action.

More specifically, the platform is a key tool for operationalising two important functions of the Alliance - 'advocacy' and 'research planning and cooperation.' This is because more effective learning and sharing between ARA members and the global adaptation community of practice induced by this platform will catalyse coalitions and improved coordination.

The platform will also directly support a number of key outcomes of the Alliance. This includes the provision of an increased profile for action-oriented research for climate adaptation (e.g., through the public website); building capacity at individual and institutional levels (e.g., through the internal knowledge base); enhanced learning and improved research uptake in implementation (e.g., through the public knowledge repository); and strengthened collaboration across countries, disciplines, and scales (e.g., through the collaboration space).

Moreover, the platform will support tracking, learning and sharing activities taking place 'offline'. Specifically, the platform will permit asynchronous communication between offline TLS workshops and outputs emerging from TLS activities will be stored on the platform.

In this way, the platform will contribute to helping ARA achieve its target impacts on reducing climate risks and building resilience particularly for the most vulnerable people, improving access to finance for climate adaptation by providing a stronger and more tailored evidence base and increasing capacity in developing countries to undertake and use research that develops local adaptation and resilience solutions

9.2 Recommendations

The launching of the TLS platform was always intended to be an initial working version, knowing that more time is needed to get sufficient feedback from trial users to improve its functionality.

It is suggested that the ARA work closely with members and partners to collaboratively improve the TLS platform through stakeholder engagements in 2023. These engagements should result in a series of iterations to the site that improve its functionality and user experience.

This process not only ensures the TLS platform is fit for purpose, but also gives members a sense of shared purpose and buy-in. This will support their adoption of the platform, and enable members to use it to strengthen engagement, knowledge sharing and collaboration.

The TLS platform is positioned to play a critical role in facilitating ARA member communication, knowledge exchange and learning as well as increase the overall visibility of the Alliance to the wider public.

10 References

10.1 List of publications produced by project

www.adaptationresearchalliance.org