



Strategy of the
research-to-action programme

Reversing Environmental Degradation in Africa and Asia (REDAA)

June 2023

About the REDAA programme

Reversing Environmental Degradation in Africa and Asia (REDAA) is a programme that catalyses research, innovation and action across sub-Saharan Africa and South and Southeast Asia, by offering grants and technical support. For more information about the programme, contact: enquiries@redaa.org

www.redaa.org



@REDAAprogramme



@REDAA-programme

REDAA is funded by UK International Development from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and managed by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)



Cover photo: Democratic Republic of the Congo. Credit Axel Fassio, CIFOR

REDAA publications may be shared and republished in accordance with the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International Public License (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0). Under the terms of this licence, anyone can copy, distribute and display the material, providing that they credit the original source and don't use it for commercial purposes or make derivatives. Different licences may apply to some illustrative elements, in which instance the licence will be displayed alongside. REDAA is happy to discuss any aspect of further usage.

Contents

Summary	1
Strategy	2
Rationale: the imperative for REDAA, and its role	2
REDAA's theory of change	3
Types of initiative that REDAA aims to support	6
Countries, landscapes and ecosystems where REDAA will support initiatives	7
Organisations that REDAA will support	8
REDAA grants and grant management	9
Communications and engagement	10
Technical support	11
Monitoring, evaluation and learning	12
Governance and programme management	13
Annexes	15
Annex 1: Development of this strategy – scoping and set-up of REDAA	15
Annex 2: Eligible countries for REDAA-supported initiatives	18
Annex 3: Ecologies and landscapes highlighted in REDAA scoping work	20
Annex 4: Key terms used by the REDAA programme	21



Summary

This strategy is for the research-to-action programme *Reversing Environmental Degradation in Africa and Asia (REDAA)*. REDAA aims to catalyse locally led research, innovation and action to help people and nature thrive together. The UK Government's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) funds the programme. This strategy has been co-developed by teams from FCDO, the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), and experts from institutions in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia. It aims to optimise REDAA's contribution by integrating with other related initiatives.

REDAA anticipates achieving three outputs between 2023 and 2028.

1. Evidence on key ecosystems and actionable information to improve restoration and management;
2. Innovative and appropriate technical approaches and tools for environment management, conservation and restoration; and
3. Capacity and institutional arrangements that are 'nature-positive', benefit local livelihoods and tackle climate change.

REDAA has a grant facility and manages competitive calls for proposals. It awards grants to locally led initiatives. Lead grant-holders are organisations with effective systems for supporting Indigenous Peoples and local communities to improve their evidence, tools, civic space and governance powers in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia or Southeast Asia. All initiatives address gender equality and social inclusion, climate resilience and action for nature, and each of them is focused on one or more of the following main thematic priorities:

1. local research and capability for research
2. resource and land use assessments
3. business models
4. financing mechanisms
5. inclusive governance systems.

Competitive grant calls will be made at least once per year. The first grant call, in June 2023, focuses on 'project' grants that will support research-to-action projects running over two to four years with budgets between £200,000 and £500,000. Subsequent grant calls will also include additional grant types, including smaller 'catalytic' grants and bigger 'programme' grants.

The REDAA programme will also provide technical support to grantees on organisational practice, focusing on topics where there is 'common demand'. Such support aims to strengthen local capacity and networks so that grantees and other practitioners can continuously learn and support each other. The programme also strives to deepen the impact of its research-to-action initiatives by spreading the knowledge generated among a wider community of practice.

IIED is providing a Scientific and Management Unit (SMU) to REDAA. The SMU will support and link research teams, and provide engagement and communication services. The SMU is governed by a REDAA Steering Committee, which FCDO chair. REDAA is also advised

by an Independent Technical Advisory Panel (ITAP), which reviews REDAA grant proposals. Feedback on this strategy is welcome – it will be adapted during the course of the programme's implementation.

Strategy

Rationale: the imperative for REDAA, and its role

There is a pressing need for REDAA. Environmental degradation worsens the living conditions of millions of the poorest people across Africa and Asia, and poses a severe threat to the natural ecosystems that support economic sectors such as agriculture, tourism, forestry and fishing. Climate change exacerbates some causes of environmental degradation and, in a vicious cycle, degradation then reduces nature's moderating effects on climate change and its impacts, which include droughts, floods and extreme weather. Yet Indigenous Peoples and local communities have huge potential to enable nature and people to thrive together in a changing climate.

This need, and the potential to do things better, is well-evidenced by the FCDO-approved strategic case for REDAA. The evidence was further explored, referenced and prioritised by a range of scoping studies for the programme, and has been used by those responsible for co-designing REDAA's strategy (see Annex 1, Development of this strategy – scoping and set-up of REDAA).

Crucially, stakeholders – those who have particular interests in enabling nature and people to thrive together – do not have good access to such evidence, nor the means and opportunities to use it to improve decisions on natural resource and ecosystems use for sustainable development. REDAA aims to change this. It will deliver grant, technical and capacity-building support to well-targeted research-to-action initiatives, led primarily by local institutions, thus generating highly cost-effective impact.

To be most useful and effective, locally led research should be interdisciplinary; should focus on filling gaps (not duplicating previous work); should take a patient approach; and must produce accessible and actionable evidence. Making evidence actionable requires communications work that engages stakeholders, fosters trust, builds knowledge and also builds local capacity to use the evidence. Such work can then influence better decisions and evidence-based actions by government, business and civil society.

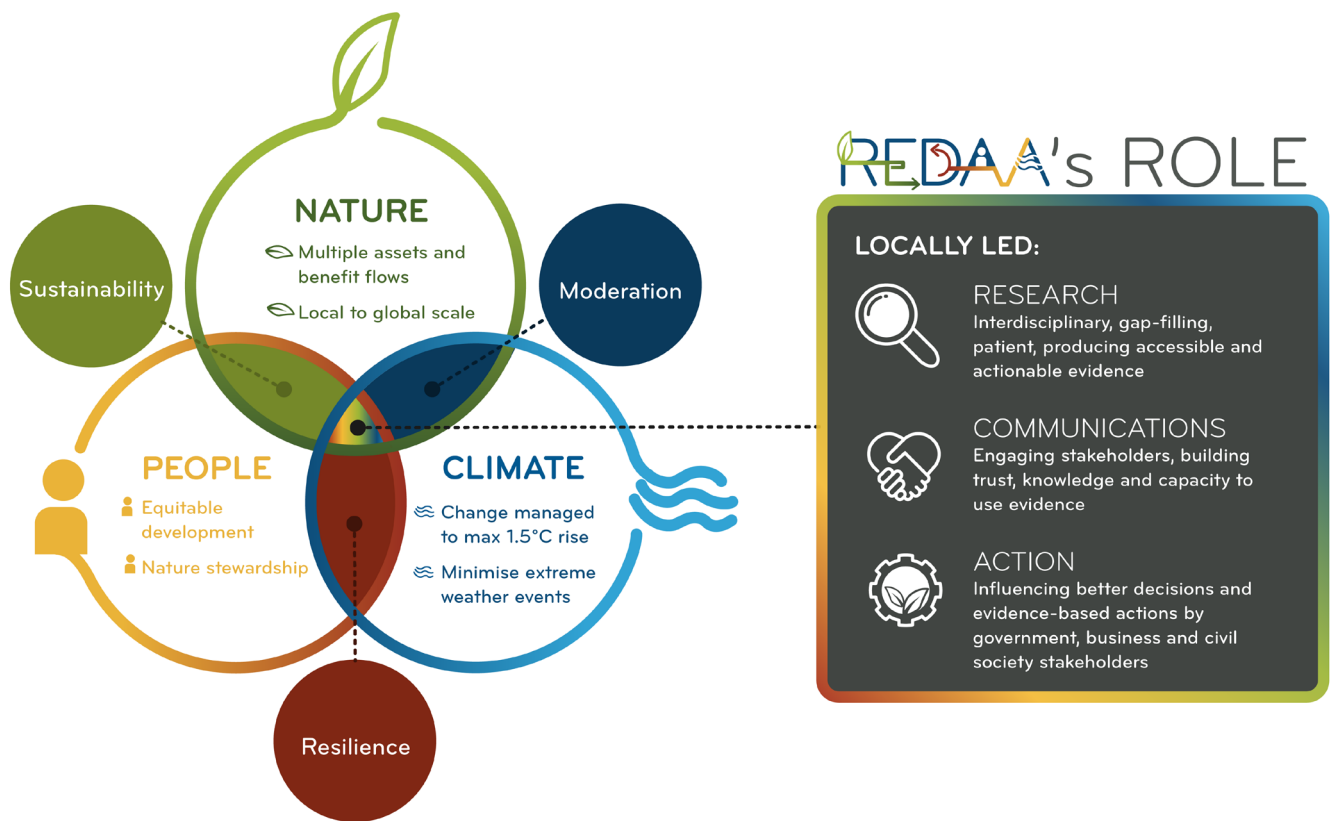
Locally led research-to-action can thus drive the three beneficial intersections between nature, people and climate:

- **Sustainability** – whereby nature benefits, and does not limit, people's wellbeing, and whereby people protect, and don't degrade, nature while making climate concerns a part of mainstream thinking and planning;
- **Moderation** – whereby nature moderates local weather and stores carbon globally, cutting the vicious cycle of nature loss and climate change; and
- **Resilience** – in which a stable climate enables resilient livelihoods and economies, reducing climate change vulnerability and associated conflict.

Figure 1 represents this strategic framing of REDAA.



Figure 1. REDAA's role: Supporting locally led research-to-action for nature and people thriving together in a changing climate



REDAA's theory of change

REDAA's 'theory of change' explains how the actions the programme takes or supports are expected to lead to specific changes. These changes are intended to address the **problem** described in the Rationale section – that stakeholders don't have enough evidence, don't have adequate access to what evidence already exists, and don't have the means and opportunities to use such evidence to improve decisions on natural resource and ecosystems use for sustainable development.

This strategy has been prepared prior to the programme's full implementation and is thus a key **input** to REDAA. The programme is planned with some explicit managed **risks**, and some **assumptions** about how REDAA complements actions taken by stakeholders, and about how the actions it supports will be adopted, adapted and sustained by institutions' policies and practices.

Other key inputs are the programme's management systems (covering how grants and technical support will be delivered and how the knowledge produced will be spread) and the established capacities of grantees and other organisations engaging or partnering with REDAA.

The final key input is funding to support those management systems, and to support or better utilise grantees' and partners' capacities.

With these inputs, and with the assumption that stakeholders have sufficient interest and authority to use REDAA's resources well, the programme anticipates delivering three **outputs** between 2023 and 2028:

1. Evidence on key ecosystems and actionable information to improve their restoration and management.
2. Innovative and appropriate technical approaches and tools for environment management, conservation and restoration.
3. Capacity and institutional arrangements that are nature-positive, benefit local livelihoods and tackle climate change.

With these outputs delivered, and with the additional assumption that stakeholders are able to take outputs to scale (something that is beyond REDAA's sole control), then the programme will achieve the **outcome** of improved governance systems.

If such positive change can be sustained, REDAA will achieve deep **impact** via improved understanding of natural landscapes in Africa and Asia that enables people and nature to thrive together. This theory of change is represented in Figure 2.

REDAA's theory of change is further developed, with indicators of impacts, outcome and outputs, with milestones and targets and sources of verification, and with better-defined assumptions, in the programme's logical framework. This will be used and adapted as a programme monitoring and management tool.



Types of initiative that REDAA aims to support

REDAA sets out to support initiatives that aim to address five thematic priorities (see below). These have been chosen after thematic scoping studies, analyses of potential priorities (led by in-region organisations), online 'in-region' surveys of those potential priorities, and co-design work carried out by experts from institutions in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia in a series of workshops.

REDAA will fund **locally led research-to-action**, where the main partner is a non-profit organisation with effective systems for supporting Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' efforts to improve their evidence, tools, civic space and governance powers.

Locally led initiatives engage residents in their design and implementation, and their leadership has strong local involvement. They are likely to employ and empower women and youth, and show concrete benefits for local communities.

Research-to-action aims to generate or supply rigorous scientific research; improve the demand for the resulting knowledge (for example by improving incentives, capacity, processes and approaches for using the new evidence); and better connect the demand for, and supply of, evidence used to influence key decisions (for example by fostering better interactions and collaborations between research providers and users).

Research in this context will improve the evidence base on key ecosystems and livelihoods, and on how to move from degraded to restored ecosystems. It will pay attention not only to ecological concerns, but also to social, political and economic issues. Research approaches should be scientific, involving clear research questions and/or hypotheses and systematic observation. They should also be rigorous, involving design, methods and conclusions that are explicit, public, replicable, open to critique and free of bias. Methods may be quantitative, qualitative or participatory. They often need to be diverse to explore different stakeholders' perspectives and issues of gender equality and social inclusion, and potentially to uncover challenging structural features of power and politics.

All REDAA-supported initiatives should demonstrate how they positively address **gender equality and social inclusion**, how they directly address climate change impacts or increase **climate resilience**, and how they take positive **action for nature**.

Such locally led initiatives will be designed to achieve objectives specific to the context in which the non-profit organisations leading them operate (see 'Organisations that REDAA will support'). They will address one or more of the following **thematic priorities**:

- **Local research and capability for research.** Evidence generation will be locally led, including on local and traditional knowledge. Capability aspects will develop local research capability, local research networks and appropriate data systems, and may install local research into national or regional information systems.
- **Resource and land use assessments.** Integrated multi-objective participatory natural resource and land use assessments, and decision-support tools, will be supported. These might include scenarios and spatial analyses that incorporate biophysical, social, political and economic data and information.
- **Business models.** Productive business models, based on ecosystem goods and services, that are sustainable, equitable and climate-resilient, will be developed by non-profit and community organisations, potentially with co-development from enterprise partners.



- **Financing mechanisms.** REDAA looks to establish finance mechanisms and finance flows that are direct, patient and long-term.
- **Inclusive governance systems.** Improving the tenure security and resource rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and improving inter-disciplinary, cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder decision-making and governance for landscapes, ecosystems and restoration initiatives are REDAA priorities.

The first call for proposals for REDAA grants (see 'REDAA grants and grant management') invites proposals for initiatives that address one or more of the thematic priorities. Subsequent grant calls may invite applications against a subset of these priorities and may take account of later iterations of this strategy.

Countries, landscapes and ecosystems where REDAA will support initiatives

The REDAA programme will support initiatives in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia. The countries where initiatives may be supported are listed in Annex 2. Initiatives might operate in more than one country, including initiatives tackling transboundary drivers of environmental degradation.

Scoping work has highlighted how narrowly defining particular ecologies and landscapes for REDAA interventions presents potential pitfalls. Many analyses of 'hotspots', or areas in need of urgent interventions, draw from biophysical data only, overlooking key social, political and economic datasets. Meanwhile, analyses that ignore local perspectives often perpetuate myths and misconceptions about the nature of, and responsibility for, environmental degradation; or indeed the potential and appropriate actions for restoration. Furthermore, different stakeholders can have varying but equally legitimate perceptions and priorities when it comes to defining 'hotspots'. And needs and opportunities can change as local, national, regional, political and economic contexts shift. Too narrow a focus would also downplay valuable interventions that transcend ecologies and landscapes (for example, those tackling transboundary drivers of environmental degradation).

Therefore, rather than prescribe a list of specific landscapes where it will support initiatives, REDAA encourages proposals to demonstrate the rationale for their location and for the scale of their operation.

Nonetheless, the work undertaken to prepare this strategy did identify ecologies and landscapes that could benefit from REDAA interventions (see Annex 3. Ecologies and landscapes highlighted in REDAA scoping work). Potential grantees may wish to consider these, but should not be limited to them.

For example, scoping work has identified peatlands and wetlands, and the intersections between peatlands, forests, wetlands, rivers, drylands, mangroves and other coastal ecosystems, as being particularly important landscapes and ecosystems for REDAA-supported initiatives.

Analysis has also highlighted urban ecosystem management and restoration, with an emphasis on secondary cities, as important. Additionally, urban-rural dynamics that degrade or restore landscapes or ecosystems are important potential areas for REDAA-supported initiatives.

Organisations that REDAA will support

REDAA will offer grants and, in some cases, technical support, to **organisations that already have proven and effective systems for supporting the actions of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.**

Put simply, REDAA aims to 'support the supporters' of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. This focus recognises that time and resources are needed to build trust and support effective capacity among small local organisations. There are many effective organisational systems and processes in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia that already support smaller local groups. REDAA aims to build on these.

Organisations leading REDAA interventions will mostly be based in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia. A minority of lead organisations based outside of these regions may be selected for REDAA support where they demonstrate strong partnerships with locally led organisations.

Organisations leading REDAA interventions will be able to demonstrate that they are:

- **non-profit organisations**, which may be non-governmental organisations, research institutions or community-based organisations that are legally registered in the countries in which they operate.
- **experienced** in the kind of work they propose to undertake.
- **financially sound** or, in the case of some organisations receiving 'catalytic grants' (see REDAA grants and grant management), having clear plans showing how funding could enable them to become financially sound.
- **staffed with the appropriate technical and financial capacity** and expertise to manage and implement projects successfully and deliver technical and financial reporting.

Private sector organisations, businesses or business associations may be included as partners of the non-profit lead organisations and may be sub-contracted by them to undertake REDAA-supported work.

Government agencies and inter-governmental and UN agencies may also be vital project partners, and we strongly encourage such partnerships. However, such partners will not be eligible to receive funding from the REDAA programme.

Consortium applications involving two or more partners will be eligible. One of these partners will be the lead organisation in terms of proposal application, initiative management and reporting.

REDAA will aim to support **organisations leading research-to-action initiatives that are:**

- **engaging multiple disciplines and diverse local voices;**
- **youth-led** or have strong youth engagement components;
- exploring and addressing **intersectional inequities and power imbalances;**
- **scaling up locally developed tools and approaches** with strong potential for benefitting people and nature; or
- establishing approaches for **multistakeholder dialogues** that create safe space for debate and negotiation on tackling degradation and planning restoration actions.



REDAA also aims to support grantees as they learn from each other, and to facilitate intra- and cross-regional learning. In developing this Strategy, REDAA learnt much about initiatives that are already under way in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia. Organisations requesting REDAA support should be able to demonstrate how they complement and/or build on such initiatives (see Monitoring, evaluation and learning).

REDAA grants and grant management

REDAA's Grant Facility will launch periodic calls for proposals from eligible organisations (for eligibility criteria, see Organisations that REDAA will support). Organisations based in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia will take priority. At least one competitive grant call will be issued each year of the programme. REDAA's Scientific and Management Unit (SMU) manages this Grant Facility (see Governance and programme management).

The Facility uses an online grants application platform (FlexiGrant platform, hosted by IIED) where organisations can submit concept notes and project proposals, and supporting information. FlexiGrant also facilitates communication between the SMU and successful grantees by providing a mechanism for managing initiatives and submitting project reports.

The REDAA grants application platform and guidance on how to use it can be found on the REDAA website under 'How to apply': <https://www.redaa.org/how-to-apply>. The SMU hosts online webinars to present key points about REDAA grant calls and to answer potential applicants' questions. These are recorded and made available on the website.

REDAA may offer three types of grants:

- **Catalytic Grants.** These relatively small-scale grants will help organisations take up opportunities arising from existing evidence, tools or resources. They might lead to improved decision-making using a tool, or further design and development of an innovation, or they might develop more effective organisational power. They could also build new partnerships or capabilities to prepare for future REDAA Project or Programme Grants. Catalytic Grants last for 6 to 12 months, and their budget is between £50,000 and £100,000. They will be awarded through dedicated grant rounds. REDAA currently plans to issue the first call for Catalytic Grants in 2024, with another one or two rounds likely between 2025-2028. Each grant round will fund between 6 and 12 proposals. The application process will require a single-stage proposal.
- **Project Grants.** These are medium-scale grants in REDAA terms, for running a research-to-action project over two to four years with a budget of between £200,000 and £500,000. The first round of Project Grants will be issued in 2023. Up to 21 grants may be awarded. There will be a two-stage proposal process: stage one will require concept notes, followed by stage two requiring full proposals. It is likely that at least one further round of Project Grants will be issued in subsequent years of REDAA.
- **Programme Grants.** These are large-scale grants in REDAA terms, for running a programme of research-to-action over two to three years with a budget of between £1,000,000 and £1,500,000. REDAA plans to launch a call for the first round of Programme Grants in 2024. There might be one further round of Programme Grants issued in subsequent years of REDAA.

Proposal review and assessment. Concept notes and proposals, once submitted, will undergo four review stages.

- **Eligibility screening.** The SMU will screen concept notes and proposals. This process will confirm that the application was received by the deadline, that the proposal and lead organisation are eligible for REDAA funding, and that the application form has been completed properly. Ineligible, incomplete or late proposals will be rejected at this stage.
- **Panel review.** Eligible concept notes and proposals will go through to review by members of REDAA's Independent Technical Advisory Panel (ITAP) and external reviewers (see Governance and programme management). The SMU will allocate each proposal to three reviewers, who will each independently score and comment on the proposal against pre-defined scoring criteria. The review will be completed within the FlexiGrant online platform.
- **Steering Committee review.** Concept notes and proposals, and the scores and comments received from the panel review, will be shared with REDAA's Steering Committee (see Governance and programme management) for final review and discussion. The Committee will consider the reviewers' scores and comments, and the portfolio of potential grants, when selecting which concept notes to take further, and when making final funding decisions for full proposals.
- **Due diligence checks.** Before issuing grant agreements, the SMU will conduct due diligence checks on lead organisations of successful proposals. These will ensure that the organisation has appropriate systems and processes in place to manage the grant and comply with funder terms and conditions. In some cases, this may highlight the need for additional support from the SMU to the lead organisation to make small adjustments. The lead organisation may be asked to put in place certain policies or processes before a grant is issued, or during the project's inception period.

The SMU aims to share feedback with unsuccessful organisations at each of the review stages so that it is clear why the proposal has not been selected.

Grant management. Grantees (of all grant sizes) will be expected to manage their projects appropriately and to comply with the funder's terms and conditions, which will be available on the REDAA website (<https://www.redaa.org/how-to-apply>). Lead organisations should ensure a suitable team is resourced to manage the project, including for management and due diligence of downstream partners.

Grantees will need to report regularly on project progress, expenditure and risk. Reporting will be via the FlexiGrant online platform, on dates that will be stipulated in the grant agreement. More information will be made available in a REDAA Operations Manual in development.

Communications and engagement

High quality communication and engagement among grantees, programme managers and people and organisations drawn to REDAA's knowledge and impact is vital. So too is communicating the opportunities the programme offers. Through good communication and engagement, REDAA aims to strengthen capacity and networks where grantees and other practitioners can continually learn and support each other. Communications and engagement are essential to deepen the positive impact of research-to-action initiatives and ensure knowledge spreads among a wide community of practice.



REDAA's communications and engagement work has four objectives.

- **Promote REDAA.** Communications and engagement will raise the profile of the REDAA programme and what it is trying to achieve; promote applications for research grants; keep all those interested informed on progress and learning; and potentially leverage further funding for the programme.
- **Facilitate learning.** Communications and engagement will share learning, information and experience between grantee organisations. REDAA will set up learning opportunities that share effective ways of working, educative set-backs and challenges, breakthroughs and innovations, and communications for research uptake (see also Monitoring, evaluation and learning).
- **Share evidence and tools.** REDAA will share and highlight the innovative tools, approaches and lessons learnt from the programme with potential new grantees and other practitioners and decision makers.
- **Support influencing.** REDAA's communications team will support grantees and other practitioners to engage with decision makers in government, the private sector and research institutions. Such engagement will aim to identify opportunities for making long-term improvements in governance, financing mechanisms and institutional arrangements in environmental management, conservation and restoration sectors.

A strong but simple identity for REDAA is planned, helping spread awareness of the programme among stakeholders. The aim is for stakeholders (grantees and other practitioners) to see REDAA as a 'community of practice', helping to generate and use evidence (including case material and information on good practice and impact) for peer-to-peer learning, and to catalyse change.

To facilitate this, the REDAA website will host communications and learning products, becoming the programme's online knowledge management hub. It will also connect to other websites where useful resources are effectively hosted.

Technical support

The REDAA programme will also provide grantees with selected forms of technical support for organisational practice. This will help to strengthen local capacity and networks that can deliver long-term impacts in REDAA regions. These technical support actions will be developed by the REDAA SMU in collaboration with grantees. The focus will be on topics where there is strong demand from grantees, and from which lessons and materials generated can also be useful for others seeking to help nature and people thrive together in REDAA regions.

Scoping studies and programme co-design suggest these may include the following.

- Shaping policy with evidence: effective communications and organisational practices for impact.
- Equity, intersectionality, gender, social inclusion and free prior and informed consent: tactics for turning good guiding principles into practice.
- Monitoring, evaluation and learning: effective practices that are of value to local stakeholders as well as to donors.

Some REDAA grantees will have rich experience and skills on such topics, and the REDAA SMU will work with them to help them deliver technical support to others. All technical support actions will build on REDAA's community of practice activities (see Communications and engagement).

Monitoring, evaluation and learning

Actions taken to monitor, evaluate and learn from REDAA (called MEL actions below) have five main objectives:

- assess progress against REDAA's theory of change;
- identify REDAA's evidence and lessons about research-to-action methods and tools;
- gather grantees' feedback;
- share evidence and lessons with the REDAA community of practice; and
- share evidence and lessons with other key actors working on environmental degradation in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia.

The SMU will review and, with confirmation from the Steering Committee, will update the theory of change and related MEL framework each year in consultation with REDAA stakeholders. This process allows adaptive programming to re-assess and re-organise projects, activities and outcomes in response to MEL findings. As part of this process, the SMU will gather feedback from grantees, the Steering Committee and the Independent Technical Advisory Panel (ITAP) through an annual stakeholders' survey to monitor the effectiveness and efficiency of REDAA management practices.

REDAA's grantees will generate MEL data and analysis showing how change is created or enhanced by use of REDAA-supported evidence, actionable information, tools and by influencing governance systems. This data will be reported to the SMU. The SMU also aims to monitor REDAA's impacts on landscapes and ecologies through a combination of commissioned studies and programme-wide reviews.

Such evaluations and independent studies will adopt methods to track changes in the area under sustainable land management practices; the number of jobs created; and reported income, knowledge and skills improvement. These methods may include GIS analysis to produce land cover maps, and pre- and post-action household surveys.

Reporting requirements for REDAA grantees will vary depending primarily on grant size. Organisations receiving Catalytic Grants will be expected to identify and map the outcomes emerging from their initiative with qualitative methods and light-touch reporting. Project and Programme grantees will be expected to produce baseline reports, mid-term reviews and final evaluations to capture both qualitative and quantitative data related to social, economic and environmental indicators, using appropriate MEL approaches and methods.

The MEL system will share evidence with the REDAA community of practice. Learning activities (see also Communications and engagement) will encourage mutual learning and knowledge-building on how actions translate into outcomes. These activities will aim to foster cross-regional as well as intra-regional learning, and to enable new initiatives to complement and build on existing initiatives and learning. The REDAA website will host lessons emerging from periodic learning events, grantees' reports, MEL studies and information about learning



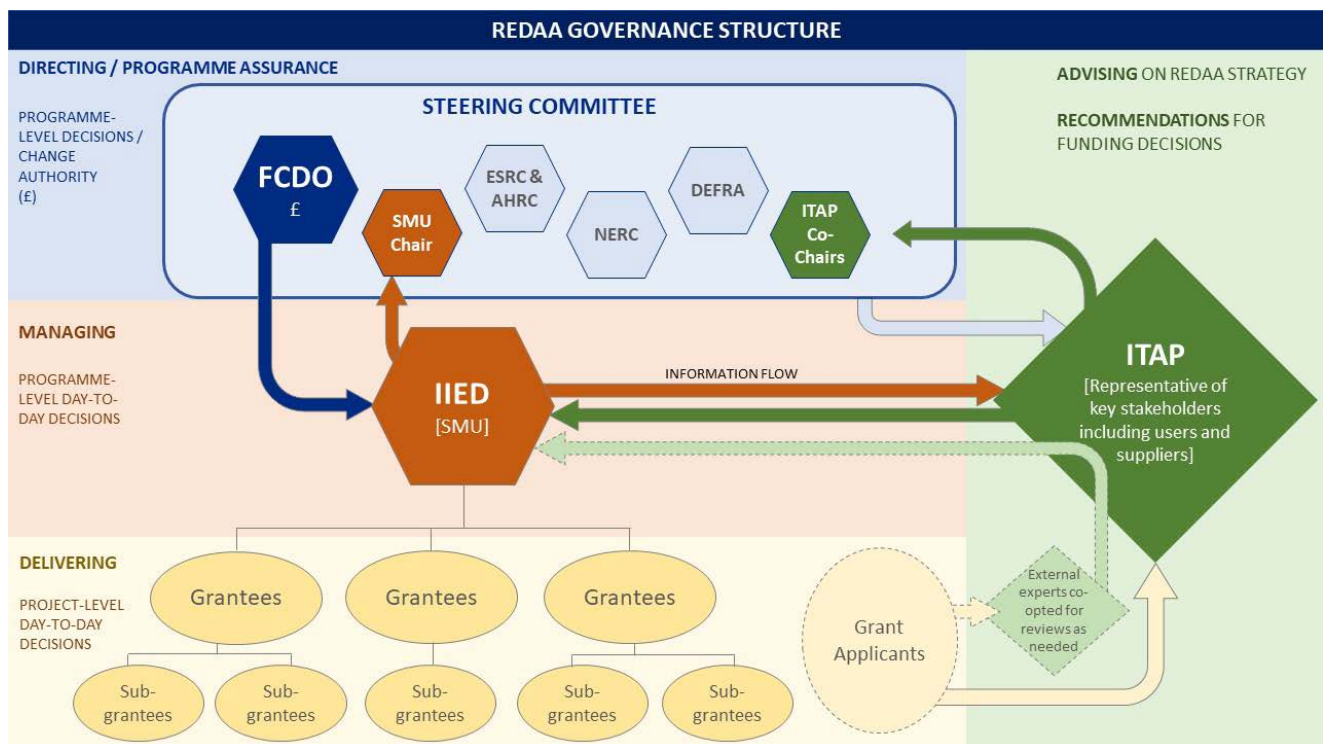
activities. Materials will be structured to suit various audiences. Grantees and others in the community of practice will be encouraged to use MEL evidence in developing clear policy and practice messages for practitioners and decision makers in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia.

Governance and programme management

The REDAA programme will adopt a 'distributed' management and governance structure. FCDO will be the main financial contributor, however other funders may join the programme. REDAA's Governance Plan, available [here](#), sets out the programme's mechanisms and processes of the governance and management. These are summarised in Figure 3, which illustrates the high-level structure of the governing bodies, including the Steering Committee, the Scientific and Management Unit (SMU) and the Independent Technical Advisory Panel (ITAP).

Figure 3. sets out REDAA's governance structure.

Figure 3. REDAA's governance structure



Abbreviations reading left to right: FCDO is the UK Government's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. ESRC is the Economic and Social Research Council, UK. AHRC is the Arts and Humanities Research Council, UK. NERC is the Natural Environment Research Council, UK. DEFRA is the UK Government's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) provides REDAA's Scientific and Management Unit (SMU). An Independent Technical Advisory Panel (ITAP) advises the REDAA programme.

The governance structure of the programme has three main elements:

- **Steering Committee.** This committee serves as the highest governing body for REDAA, responsible for the programme's overall direction, and for ensuring quality of process, results and value for money. The Steering Committee is chaired by FCDO and membership includes other selected agencies, two Co-Chairs of the ITAP, and the Chair of the SMU.
- **Independent Technical Advisory Panel (ITAP).** The ITAP provides strategic and technical advice and guidance to the Steering Committee and the SMU and, where appropriate, to distinct components of the programme. Membership of the ITAP comprises 10-12 experts from academic, civil society, government and international institutions. Of these members, two or three are from institutions in each REDAA focal region (sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia).
- **Scientific and Management Unit (SMU).** The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) has been contracted to provide REDAA's SMU. A dedicated team will provide scientific coordination and management for the programme. Day-to-day administration will include financial monitoring and compliance tasks, grant management and administration, commercial procurement, website management, risk management, due diligence and safeguarding. The SMU is also responsible for overall quality assurance and coherence of results and outputs; for monitoring, evaluation and learning systems; and for synthesising research outcomes and disseminating results and evidence to practitioners and decision-makers as well as to the public.

The REDAA research-to-action activities will be delivered by grantees and their downstream partners (sub-grantees) – i.e. recipients of REDAA grant funding.



Annexes

Annex 1: Development of this strategy — scoping and set-up of REDAA

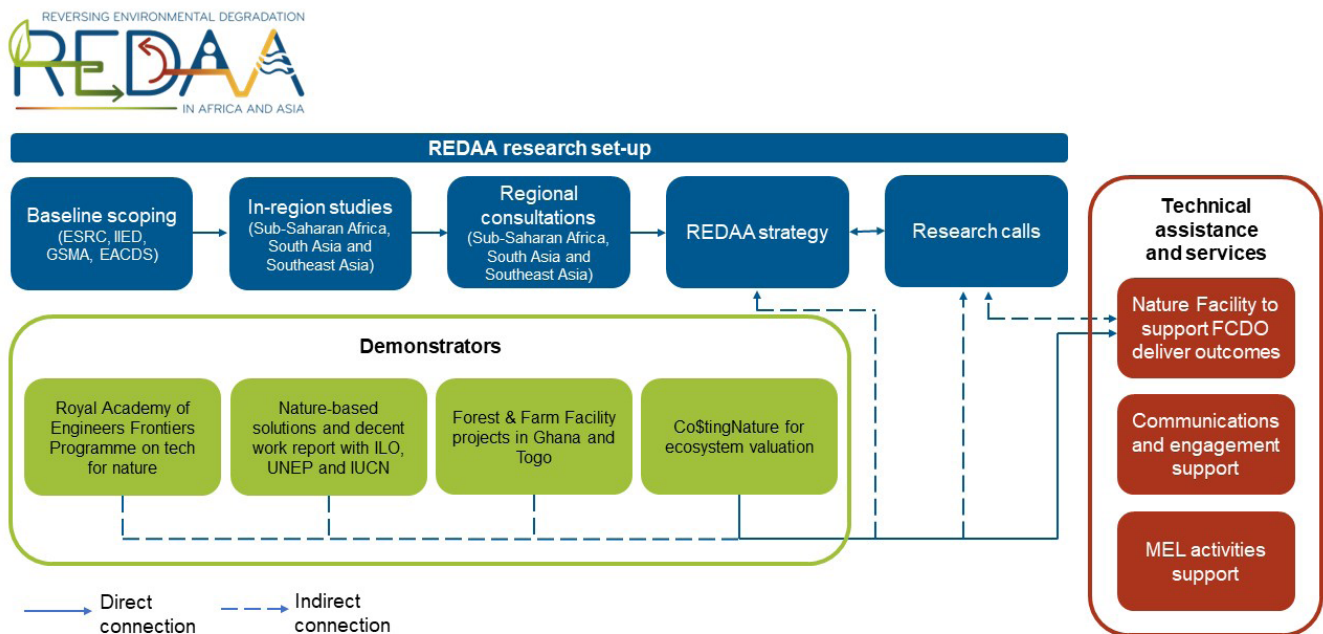
The REDAA programme was approved by the FCDO for development in 2021 and IIED began work with FCDO to scope and set up the programme in November that year.

In the scoping and set-up phase of REDAA the programme team has:

- undertaken or overseen and published a range of scoping studies;
- verified the imperative for the programme with stakeholders in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia;
- facilitated some of these stakeholders to co-design key priorities that the REDAA grant and support programme can address;
- supported and learned from several 'demonstrator' projects;
- built the core foundations for effective management of the programme; and
- shaped the REDAA Strategy from all the above.

Figure 4 illustrates the main activities undertaken in the scoping and set-up period.

Figure 4. Main activities undertaken in REDAA scoping and set-up period and the organisations involved



Abbreviations reading from left to right: ESRC is the Economic and Social Research Council, UK. IIED is the International Institute for Environment and Development. GSMA is the Global System for Mobile Communications Association. EACDS stands for Expert Advisory Call Down Services and is a technical advisory call-down service that provides rapid-response, expert support for the development of U.K. aid programs. FCDO is the UK Government's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. ILO is the International Labour Organization. UNEP is the United Nations Environment Programme. IUCN is the International Union for Conservation of Nature. MEL stands for monitoring and evaluation.

Lessons learned

REDAA strategy development learnt much from existing and previous programmes of a similar nature. REDAA aims to build directly on the impacts of some programmes, such as the Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation programme. Among the lessons learnt are:

- **Knowledge management.** It is important to consider and plan for REDAA's legacy right from the outset. This insight shaped the development team's approach to REDAA's website development, which will become REDAA's online knowledge management hub and an important focus when fostering a community of practice.
- **Active learning.** It will be valuable to synthesise findings and lessons from across the REDAA programme throughout its lifetime. This lesson has underpinned the emphasis on good communications, and monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) in all REDAA-supported initiatives. It is the programme's rationale for periodic learning events among grantees, for peer-to-peer and programme-level learning, and for strong communications and MEL capacity in the SMU.
- **Working with other initiatives.** It will be crucial to find REDAA's comparative advantage and unique position internationally. The programme will work best alongside, and in communication and collaboration with, existing bodies of work and ongoing programming. This lesson has led the strategy development team's approach to positioning REDAA's role and preparing its criteria and guidance for grant calls.

Scoping studies, surveys and co-design workshops

A range of scoping studies were also conducted, and their results influenced strategy development:

1. The development of innovative landscape management regimes and nature-based solutions Judith Fisher, Tetra Tech International Development Europe Ltd. April 2022
2. Trade-offs between poverty alleviation and environmental restoration Charis Enns, Global Development Institute, University of Manchester. March 2022
3. Low tech, bottom up, place-based approaches to addressing environmental degradation Ebony Holland, International Institute for Environment and Development. April 2022
4. Intersectional inequalities to consider in action to address environmental degradation Rebecca Elmhirst, School of Applied Sciences, University of Brighton. April 2022
5. What is environmental degradation, what are its causes, and how to respond? Ian Scoones, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex. August 2022
6. How research influences government action for nature Xiaoting Hou-Jones, Steve Bass, James Mayers and Dilys Roe, International Institute for Environment and Development. September 2022
7. Exploring barriers and incentives to digital solutions in natural resource management Anna Colquhoun and Leila Guici, GSMA; Xiaoting Hou-Jones, the International Institute for Environment and Development; Varsha Ashok and Kaavya Arakoni, the Busara Center for Behavioural Economics. April 2023
8. Scoping study of research-to-action priorities for the Reversing Environmental Degradation in Africa and Asia (REDAA) Programme: Southeast Asia. Sophie Lewis, David Gritten and Ronnakorn Triraganon, RECOFTC. May 2023
9. Turning the tide on environmental degradation in South Asia: Scoping study of research-to-action priorities for REDAA Sunita Chaudhary, Bandana Shakya, Biraj Adhikari, Samuel Thomas, Binaya Pasakhala, Nakul Chettri, Kabir Uddin and Babar Khan, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development. May 2023



10. *Potential priority issues for REDAA in sub-Saharan Africa. A rapid literature review to inform the research-to-action programme Reversing Environmental Degradation in Africa and Asia (REDAA)* Francesca Booker, Janine Duffy and Xiaoting Hou-Jones, International Institute for Environment and Development. May 2023
11. *Scoping study of research-to-action priorities for REDAA: West and Central Africa.* United Nations University – Institute of Natural Resource Assessment. Forthcoming 2023
12. *Scoping study of research-to-action priorities for REDAA: East and Southern Africa.* ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability. Forthcoming 2023

Scoping studies that focused on potential research-to-action priorities for REDAA in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia were shared within online surveys involving key experts working at local to region-wide levels in each region. These surveys sought input to refine the potential priorities.

Drawing on the scoping paper and the online survey results, the REDAA development team has been co-hosting workshops with experts from each region to further co-design priorities. REDAA will be shaped to work closely with key stakeholders on locally led research, innovation and action to help people and nature thrive together. The workshops have been completed in [Southeast Asia](#) and [South Asia](#) but are ongoing in sub-Saharan Africa. Findings 'to date' from this co-design work have been incorporated into this Strategy. Ongoing work will inform periodic reviews.

Demonstrator projects

REDAA's set-up phase has supported several demonstrator projects, and this strategy draws on their findings. The projects were:

1. **Piloting technology-enabled approaches to reverse environmental degradation.** REDAA supported several pilot projects that were co-designed by international participants in an online symposium run by the Frontiers Programme of the UK's Royal Academy of Engineering. The focus was on catalysing new research-to-action projects and partnerships to deliver technology-enabled approaches that reverse environmental degradation in Africa and Asia. The pilots REDAA supported are delivering their results through 2023 and into early 2024.
2. **Co\$ting Nature – tool development.** AmbioTEK and King's College London developed an innovative spatial policy support tool. It maps nature's contributions to people, the risks people face from nature loss, and the risks human development activity poses to nature.
3. **Value chain improvements for food security, incomes, job creation and restoration – Ghana.** Tele Bere forest and farm producer organisation in Ghana ran this project, filling a critical research-to-action gap in a wider initiative of the Forest and Farm Facility.
4. **Organic fertilizer and biopesticides for the empowerment of young people and women in a context of climate change – Togo.** SCOOPS Tibi forest and farm producer organisation in Togo ran this project, also on key research-to-action issues that will be followed up by the Forest and Farm Facility.
5. **Nature-based solutions and decent work.** An ILO-IUCN-UNEP report on nature-based solutions and decent work was delivered in December 2022 at the Convention on Biological Diversity's fifteenth Conference of the Parties meeting (CBD COP15). This first report in a biennial series addresses how investments in nature-based solutions can create decent work in support of a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all.

In addition, a strategy for trialling a **Nature Facility for FCDO** has been developed and implemented as part of the REDAA programme in the 2023 financial year and early 2024. The Nature Facility will support integration of inclusive nature outcomes into FCDO operations and procedures and support delivery of nature-proofed development assistance, including effective use of International Climate Finance commitments.

The strategy development process also put a concerted focus on programme management, communications and monitoring, evaluation and learning. The REDAA Theory of Change and Logical Framework were developed iteratively through the scoping and set-up period as findings came in from scoping, co-design and demonstrator project work. They remain living project management tools that will be adapted throughout the REDAA programme.

The REDAA development team also delivered the key grant facility and programme management systems run by the SMU and established the Steering Committee and Independent Technical Advisory Panel. Strategic and effective approaches for MEL and communications for REDAA were developed, tested and adapted through the scoping and set-up period. All key REDAA information in addition to this Strategy is available on the [REDAA website](#).

Annex 2: Eligible countries for REDAA-supported initiatives

Implementation activities supported by REDAA grants must take place within one or more eligible countries within the focal region selected (either sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia or Southeast Asia). Eligible countries in each focal region are listed below.

REDAA — Eligible focal countries		
sub-Saharan Africa	South Asia	Southeast Asia
Angola	Bangladesh	Cambodia
Benin	Bhutan	Indonesia
Botswana	India	Lao People's Democratic Republic
Burkina Faso	Maldives	Malaysia
Burundi	Nepal	Myanmar
Cabo Verde	Pakistan	Philippines
Cameroon	Sri Lanka	Thailand
Central African Republic		Timor-Leste
Chad		Viet Nam
Comoros		
Congo		
Côte d'Ivoire		
Democratic Republic of the Congo		



REDAA — Eligible focal countries		
sub-Saharan Africa	South Asia	Southeast Asia
Djibouti		
Equatorial Guinea		
Eritrea		
Eswatini		
Ethiopia		
Gabon		
Gambia		
Ghana		
Guinea		
Guinea-Bissau		
Kenya		
Lesotho		
Liberia		
Madagascar		
Malawi		
Mali		
Mauritania		
Mauritius		
Mozambique		
Namibia		
Niger		
Nigeria		
Rwanda		
São Tomé and Príncipe		
Senegal		
Sierra Leone		
South Africa		
South Sudan		
Tanzania		
Togo		
Uganda		
Zambia		
Zimbabwe		

Annex 3: Ecologies and landscapes highlighted in REDAA scoping work

REDAA encourages action to protect, conserve, restore and/or manage sustainably terrestrial, freshwater and coastal ecosystems, but does not prescribe a list of specific ecologies or landscapes for proposals. Rather, it encourages potential grantees to propose a rationale for their choice of location and operational scale. In making their choices, applicant organisations may wish to consider, but should not be limited to, the ecologies and landscapes identified in work undertaken to prepare this REDAA strategy. The REDAA scoping studies can be found here: [sub-Saharan Africa](#), [South Asia](#) and [Southeast Asia](#).

Sub-Saharan Africa. Scoping studies led by organisations based in sub-Saharan Africa have provided initial results on each of the four sub-regions (West, Central, Eastern and Southern Africa), thus informing this Strategy. To complement this work, the SMU carried out a rapid review of grey and academic literature and identified 'hotspots' highlighted in the review – locations where landscape, biodiversity or ecosystem degradation are occurring, show potential for restoration, or where ecosystem services provide significant contributions to people. The review noted the wide range of definitions and approaches used to describe such locations, but settled on five hotspots:

- The Congo Basin: a mosaic of rivers, forests, savannas, swamps and flooded forests that spans six countries (Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon).
- Coastal forests of eastern Africa: these are found in the coastal region along the eastern edge of Africa, including in parts of Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania and Mozambique.
- The Eastern Afromontane: the mountain chains of eastern Africa, extending from the Ethiopian mountains, through the East Africa nations such as Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, and Tanzania, towards Malawi and Mozambique in the south.
- Guinean forests of West Africa: the lowland forests of West Africa stretch from Guinea and Sierra Leone eastward to the Sanaga River in Cameroon. Remnant fragments of Guinean forests are found in Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria.
- Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands.

South Asia. Expertise from institutions in South Asia used several criteria to identify ecologies and landscape types where REDAA-supported initiatives might be valuable. These criteria were: landscapes containing 'global biodiversity hotspots', or '200 global ecoregions' or 'important bird or biodiversity areas'; landscapes and ecologies with significant scale and severity of environmental degradation; landscapes and ecologies vulnerable to climate exposure and change; and, areas inhabited by marginalised communities, including tribal and Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

The ecologies and landscapes identified are:

- The Himalaya (the mountain region across Bhutan, India, Nepal and Pakistan)
- Western Ghats (the west coast region of India)
- Chittagong Hill Tracts in southeastern Bangladesh
- Sundarbans mangroves, spanning the area from the Baleswar River in Bangladesh's division of Khulna to the Hooghly River in India's state of West Bengal
- atolls in the Maldives
- mangroves along the coast and the Kelani River Basin in the Colombo district of Sri Lanka.



Southeast Asia. Expertise from institutions in Southeast Asia used several criteria to identify ecologies and landscape types where REDAA-supported initiatives might be valuable. These criteria were: landscapes or ecologies containing 'key biodiversity areas' or 'important bird and biodiversity areas'; those containing intact or fragmented key habitats, including protected areas; and places where REDAA interventions could benefit vulnerable groups, including Indigenous Peoples, women, youth, migrant workers and landless labourers. The ecologies and landscapes identified are:

- Inle Lake Wildlife Sanctuary, Myanmar
- Dawna Tenasserim, a transboundary area of Myanmar and Western Thailand
- Nan Province, Thailand
- Nam Poui National Protected Area, Laos
- Tonle Sap, UNESCO World Heritage Site, Cambodia
- Pray Lang and the Eastern Plains Landscape, Cambodia
- Quang Nam and Nghe An Provinces, Viet Nam
- Cagayan Valley Region, the Philippines
- Riau Province, Sumatra, Indonesia
- North Kalimantan Province, Borneo, Indonesia
- South Sulawesi Province, Sulawesi, Indonesia
- Papua Barat, Papua and West Papua Provinces, Indonesia

Annex 4: Key terms used by the REDAA programme

Baseline: a baseline describes the starting point – a measure of the situation before a project starts – against which progress can be measured or comparisons can be made.

Community of practice: a group of people who share a common concern, a set of problems, or an interest in a professional practice who come together to fulfil both individual and group goals.

Consultant: an individual or an organisation providing a specific service to the project or REDAA programme, with well-defined outputs and other deliverables, in return for a pre-agreed fee.

Environmental degradation: refers to the many human-caused processes that drive the decline or loss in biodiversity, ecosystem functions or ecosystem services.

Gender equality and social inclusion: refers to giving equal access and opportunities and removing the barriers of discrimination towards girls, women, non-binary and other marginalised and vulnerable populations, such as disabled people, indigenous populations, refugees and migrants.

Impact: refers to both the long-term goal that the project expects to contribute to achieving, and to positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by the project, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.

Indigenous Peoples: one definition of Indigenous Peoples, by the World Bank, is 'distinct social, cultural, and ethnic groups whose norms and practices are tied to ancestral lands and natural resources where they live or from the land from which they have been displaced'. However, there is no generally accepted definition of Indigenous Peoples in a global context.

Some Indigenous Peoples choose different terms. Further, some national governments do not recognise the term Indigenous Peoples within their legal frameworks.

Intersectional inequalities: refers to the multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage (for example intersections of race, caste, ethnicity, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, age and socioeconomic status) that can compound and create obstacles that often are not understood among conventional ways of thinking.

Lead applicant: This person, on behalf of the lead organisation, takes responsibility for the management and accountability of the project and will be the main contact point for all aspects of project management.

Lead organisation: the organisation that will make an agreement with the REDAA programme and receive a grant, if the proposal is successful, and will be ultimately responsible for delivery and management of the project, including management of any partners and sub-grantees.

Local communities: a local community is a group of interacting people living in a common location.

Locally led: refers to initiatives that engage residents in their design and implementation, and their leadership has strong local involvement. They are likely to employ and empower women and youth, and show concrete benefits for local communities.

Milestones: stages in the desired trajectory from the baseline to the target of a project, against which progress can be assessed and modifications to the project identified.

Research-to-action: aims to generate or supply rigorous scientific research; improve the demand for the resulting knowledge (for example by improving incentives, capacity, processes and approaches for using the new evidence); and better connect the demand for, and supply of, evidence used to influence key decisions (for example by fostering better interactions and collaborations between research providers and users).

Restoration: environmental restoration refers to addressing the challenge of environmental degradation by improving the condition of natural landscapes in ways that enable people and nature to thrive together.

Outcome: the specific objective of the project. Identifies what will change and who will benefit from project outputs.

Output: the specific, direct deliverables of the project. These will provide the conditions necessary to achieve the Outcome.

Partner: an umbrella term to refer to any organisation that the REDAA programme works with, or that REDAA-supported project lead organisations work, on the basis of equitable partnership.

Sub-grantee: a partner organisation that is receiving REDAA funds through a formal subgrant (with grant terms and conditions) between them and the lead organisation. Subgrantees normally contribute to the intellectual leadership and strategic direction of the project.

