

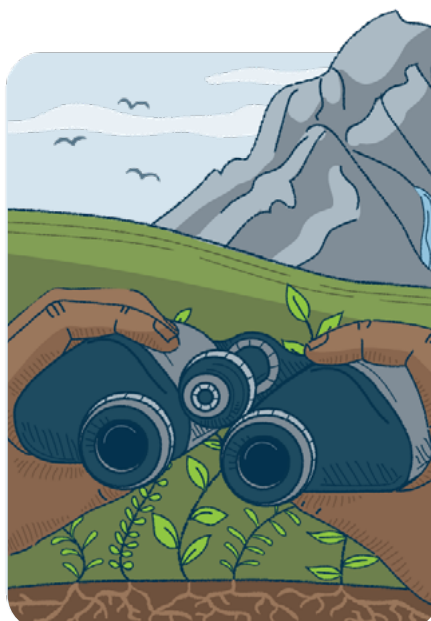
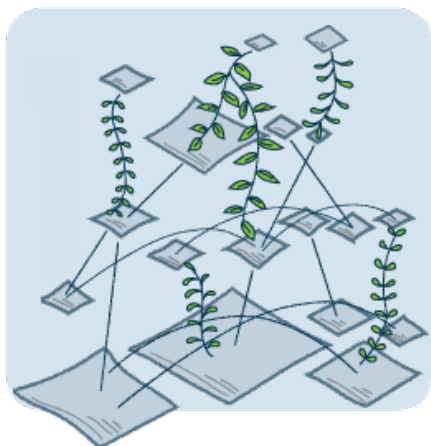


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ABOUT THIS STRATEGY

This strategy (2025-2030) serves as a compass for SouthSouthNorth (SSN), guiding our focus for the next five years to achieve our vision and mission. It sets out SSN's position and approach to addressing the intersecting global crises of climate change, inequality, biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation.

The strategy is underpinned by a theory of change that identifies four long-term desired outcomes, and the SSN approaches that will contribute to these outcomes. The SSN theory of change serves as our guide and provides

a foundation to track our progress towards outcomes, actively reflect on and learn from our successes and failures, and share this learning internally and with others.

The strategy will be reviewed periodically to adapt and innovate our approach, as well as course correct, as we respond to changing contexts.

An internal organisational framework has been developed alongside the strategy to support its implementation.



| View from SSN's central office in Cape Town, South Africa, (above), and our staff who helped shape this document (below)

A WORD FROM THE SSN DIRECTORS

For the first 15 years of SSN's existence, our strategy was reflected in the projects we ran. With steady growth, a significant increase in funding, and more than 120 staff, including a growing global team, implementing a large and diverse portfolio of programmes, it has become more and more difficult to define a simple, coherent purpose. This strategy, which has been several years in the making and has gone through multiple iterations, provides a framework encapsulating a focused, collective purpose. It reflects the long-term goals and immediate objectives by which we will judge (and report on) our success every year. It represents a firm commitment to focus on – and hold ourselves accountable to – becoming more than just the sum of our parts. This is our commitment that SSN's various programmes will be held to an accountable set of coherent outcomes; it reflects an integrated ambition to impact on our world.

All our work will be guided by these strategic objectives, which will inform our future propositions and the ever-increasing capability of our staff; ensuring a coherent purpose around which to drive our shared ambition for climate justice, protection of biodiversity and the realisation of resilient, low emissions development.

As we present this strategy for SSN, spanning the period from 2025 to 2030, we are reminded of the profound challenges facing our world. The escalating impacts of climate change, growing inequality, biodiversity loss, and ecosystem degradation have created an urgent need for transformative action. At SSN, we believe that this moment demands not only clarity of vision, but also bold, collective steps forward.

This strategy represents a vital compass for our organisation as we celebrate 25 years of our existence,



| SSN's four Directors, from top-left: Shehnaaz Moosa, Robi Redda, Carl Wesselink, Joshua Ogada

and prepare to navigate the complexities of the coming years. It reaffirms our commitment to working at the intersection of these global crises, with a clear focus on addressing the underlying systemic challenges that perpetuate inequality and environmental degradation. We are guided by our theory of change, which outlines the long-term outcomes we seek to achieve, and the pathways SSN will pursue to contribute meaningfully to these goals.

This document is not just a blueprint; it is a living, evolving guide that will be periodically reviewed and adapted to ensure we remain responsive to emerging challenges and opportunities. Our ability to reflect on our progress, learn from both our successes and failures, and share that learning internally and with our partners will be critical to our success. We will be learning our strategy, not merely delivering on it.

We also recognise that no strategy can succeed without the internal structures to support its implementation. This strategy will be undergirded by an organisational framework that will enable us to operationalise our ambitions and stay on course. As we embark on this journey, we do so with a deep sense of responsibility, but also with optimism, knowing that together with our partners, we can make a meaningful contribution to a more just and sustainable world.

We look forward to working with all of you as we put this strategy into action, and as we continue to strive for a world where people and planet thrive in harmony.

Sincerely,

The Directors of SouthSouthNorth



| SSN's central offices in Cape Town, South Africa

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2024, SSN celebrated 25 years of working to tackle climate change in Africa and the Global South. We also set our new strategic direction for the final five years of the decade of action and in the rapidly closing window of opportunity to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement and avoid dangerous and catastrophic climate change.¹

SSN's strategy is guided by our mission to accelerate transformative climate-resilient development in the Global South, to achieve our vision for a just and resilient world where people and ecosystems can thrive.

We believe that unlocking transformative change requires dramatic shifts across social, economic, and ecological systems and simultaneously tackling the root causes of the major global and deeply interconnected crises facing us today: climate change, inequality, biodiversity loss and ecological degradation.

How we will drive impact

To respond to these systemic stresses over the next five years, we will focus on driving change in four interrelated impact areas: (1) resilient systems, (2) finance availability and access, (3) capabilities, innovation and knowledge, and (4) multi-level governance.

We believe targeted action is needed in these areas to truly accelerate transformative climate-resilient development in the Global South. Flourishing and healthy social and ecological systems are the bedrock of sustainable livelihoods, climate protection, and the well-being of both people and nature. Building these systems requires transforming how finance flows, especially to reach those who need it most on the frontlines of the climate crisis, and leveraging our collective and diverse capabilities, innovation and knowledge within inclusive governance systems where no one is left behind.

For each of these four areas of work, we aim to develop programmes that contribute to the following four long-term outcomes:

- 01** Resilient social and ecological systems in a changing climate.
- 02** Transformed financial systems, architectures and flows that facilitate appropriate and inclusive access to finance.
- 03** Strengthened capabilities through innovation, learning and leveraging diverse knowledge systems.
- 04** Inclusive multi-level governance that reflects the interests and meaningful contributions of those in the Global South.

Addressing systemic crises that exacerbate one another demands an integrated and holistic approach. Accordingly, SSN's strategy is guided by international climate, development, and environmental Rio conventions and frameworks, and seeks to coordinate and align across various finance streams, including climate, biodiversity, and just transitions.

Our approach

SSN will bring our distinctive way of working to all our efforts in achieving these outcomes, which has been developed and refined over decades operating at the forefront of enhancing climate resilience.

This approach seeks to foster Southern leadership in all that we do, advance multi-stakeholder collaboration and processes, facilitate knowledge and innovation brokering to bridge the knowledge to climate action gap, enhance the capability of institutions and experts in the Global South, and work collaboratively with those championing climate resilience.

We also channel resources to demonstrate innovation and gather the evidence required to scale sustainable adaptive action.

Grounded in justice

For SSN, truly climate-resilient interventions and actions promote justice and equity by meeting the needs of the people and ecosystems they are embedded within. We seek to advance distributional, recognitional, and procedural justice across our work.

This means the benefits and burdens of climate action must be spread fairly, and poorer and more marginalised communities should not bear the brunt of climate and environmental impacts (distributional justice). Diverse knowledge systems, norms, identities and values need to be acknowledged and respected in our climate responses, especially those of the most marginalised and climate-affected groups (recognitional justice). Additionally, decision-making processes need to ensure that everyone has a fair opportunity to shape climate change-related decisions and actions (procedural justice).

Moving forward together

As we move forward with our strategy, we will continue to walk alongside Southern-based climate leaders and decision-makers, establishing and continuing to grow trusted, long-term relationships with communities, government and civil society. We invite partners to join us in order to leverage the collective skills, networks, learning, resources and creativity needed to catalyse the transition to a just and resilient world.



SSN staff working together to drive forward SSN's strategic vision

OUR VISION AND MISSION

SouthSouthNorth (SSN) envisions a just and resilient world where people and ecosystems can thrive. In support of this vision, our mission is to accelerate transformative climate-resilient development in the Global South. For SSN, justice underpins truly transformative change, cutting across all our efforts to shape a resilient future.

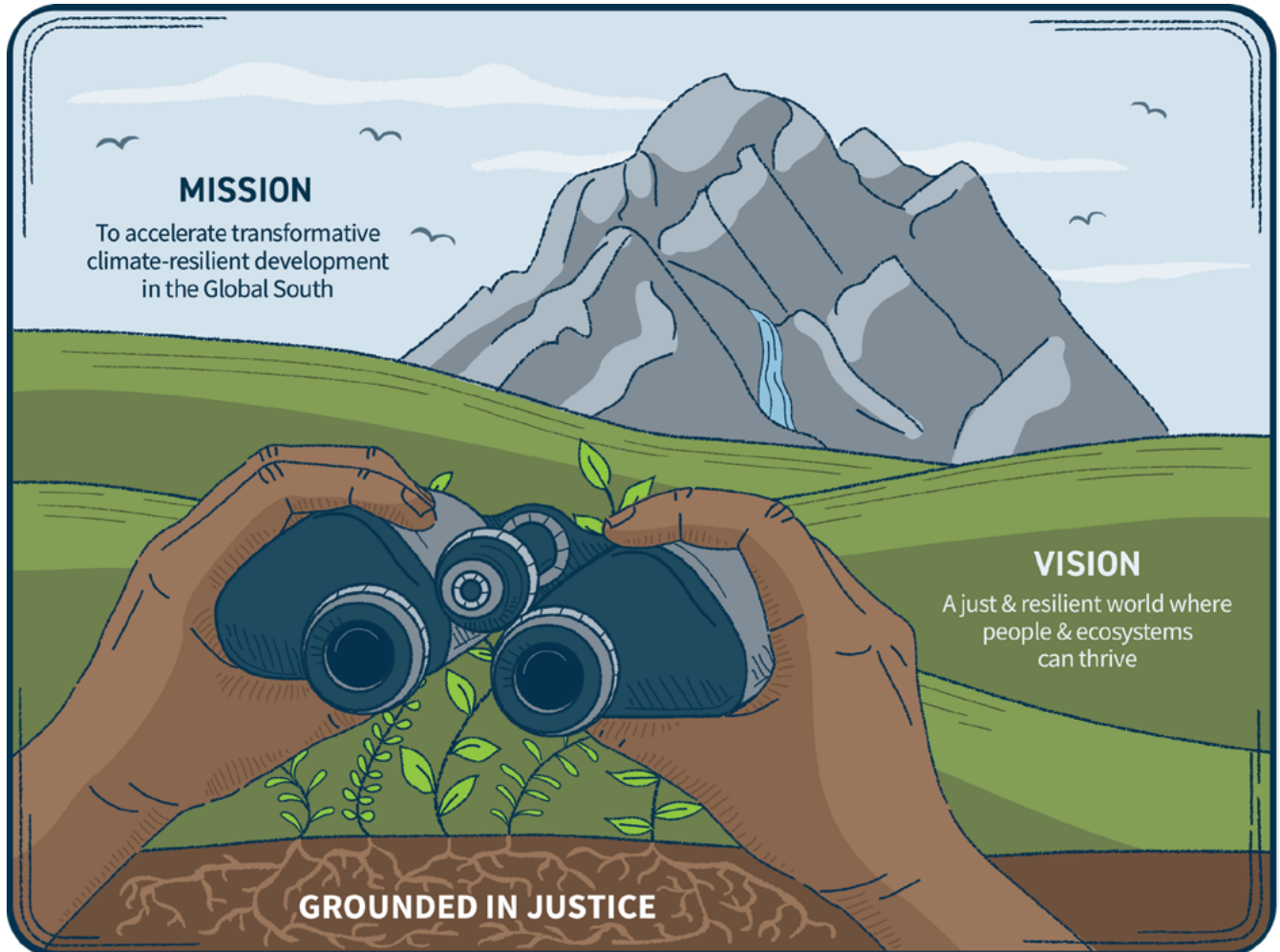


Figure 1: SSN's vision and mission

THE ROLE OF SOUTHSOUTHNORTH

SSN was established in 1999 to support South-South and South-North collaboration to ensure sustainable development was at the core of responses to climate change.² Firmly rooted in Africa, our 25 years of work from local to global scales has shown that the Global South plays a pivotal role in shaping a resilient future.

The impacts and burden of climate change disproportionately affect countries and communities in the Global South that bear the least responsibility

for causing climate change. There is a need for organisations like SSN that understand and identify with this context; are able to represent the issues; and can advocate for support to these countries.

SSN has a deep network of partnerships across Africa and the Global South through multiple, diverse international programmes, both current and historical, supported by a range of funding partners, including bilateral donors and philanthropies.

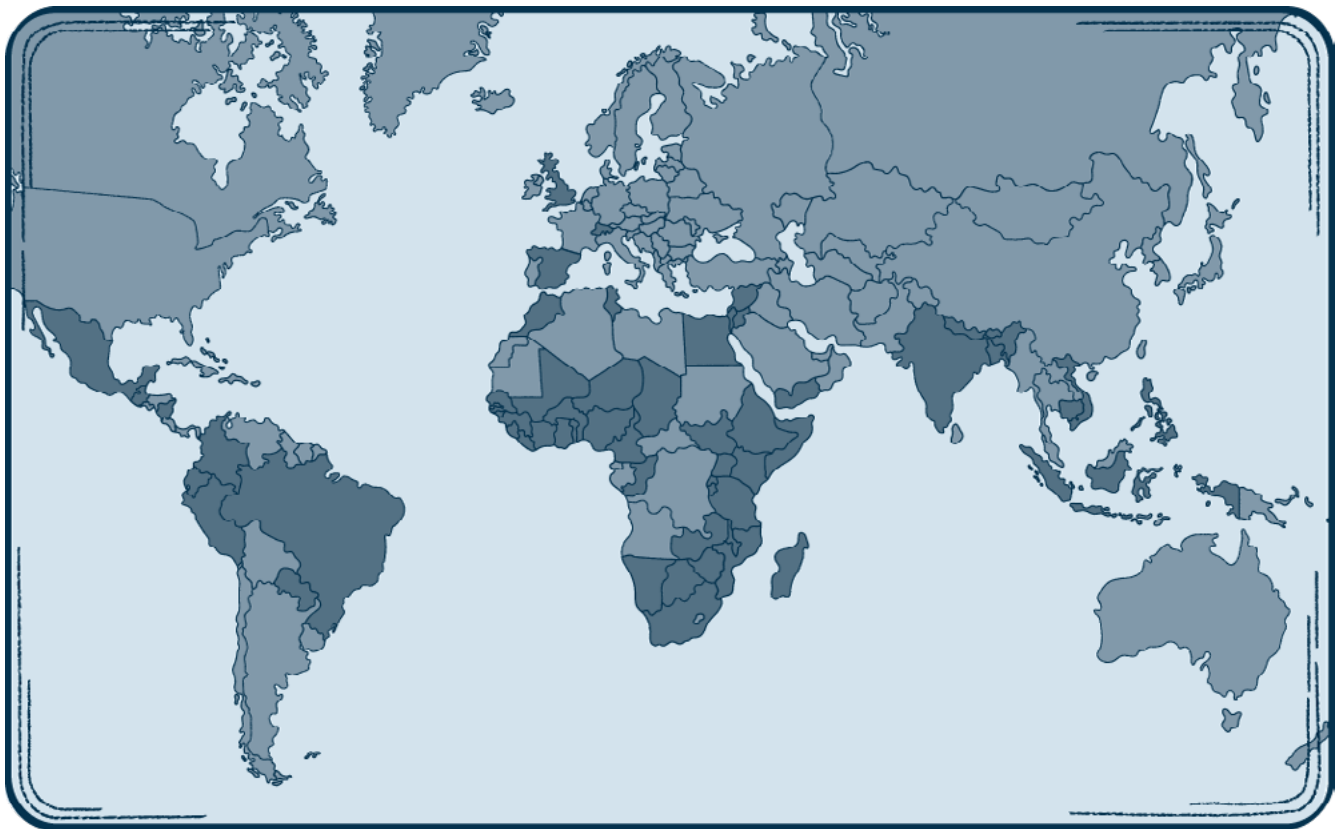


Figure 2: Where SSN is actively working

We bridge knowledge and evidence gaps, strengthen capabilities, nurture inspired and dynamic leadership, demonstrate and scale innovation and foster mutually supportive collaborations, informed by regional experiences and circumstances.

By doing so, SSN aspires to drive inclusive policies and actions that move beyond incremental change towards systemic transformation to achieve just and resilient outcomes.

Mobilising local, Southern and African expertise and leadership, underpinned by a deep understanding of socio-political and cultural contexts, is what defines our work. As a leader in climate knowledge brokering,³ SSN ensures that moving knowledge into action is inclusive and supports co-creation.

We amplify the voices of the often unheard and marginalised sections of society - including women and girls, young people, the elderly, marginalised ethnic groups, Indigenous Peoples and people with

differing abilities. These groups are championing climate action and defending the environment in the face of safety concerns and powerful interest groups as well as worsening climate and environmental impacts.

“ As a leader in climate knowledge brokering, SSN ensures that moving knowledge into action is inclusive and supports co-creation. ”

We work across multiple scales. This starts from supporting community-led responses and local actors as critical architects of change in their context, to assisting national governments and regional bodies to drive forward their understanding of where action is most

needed and how best to go about fostering it. At global levels, we ensure Southern and African perspectives are represented in global discussions traditionally dominated by the Global North.

SSN's focus and concern extend beyond combating climate change; we are dedicated to reframing and redefining the paradigm of climate resilience to ensure it is more equitable, transformative, and anchored in justice and human and ecological well-being.

SYSTEMIC STRESSES IN THE FACE OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INJUSTICES

The impacts of climate change are already evident. They will worsen even if the Paris Agreement goals are attained to limit global temperature increase to well below 2°C and at least 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

Many countries are already experiencing climate-related losses and damages.⁴ This is most acutely affecting regions, countries and communities already negatively impacted by historic and current patterns of inequity, unsustainable development and locations in geographically-vulnerable areas, including least developed countries, many African countries and small island developing states.⁵ Marginalised and historically disadvantaged groups⁶ are experiencing the harshest impacts of climate change and too often do not have their voices heard in planning and implementation processes.

Economic inequality is rising. In the past decade, the richest 1% of people captured around half of all new global wealth.⁷ Climate impacts exacerbate these existing socioeconomic inequalities, amplifying many of the intersecting challenges to development and well-being. Climate change has already affected lives and livelihoods through a range of climate impacts, including heat stress, drought, the destruction of homes and infrastructure, loss of property and income, harm to human health and reduced food and water security.⁸

Climate change is also a major driver of ecosystem degradation, which is one of the major underlying causes of biodiversity loss, contributing to habitat destruction, altered ecosystems and associated loss of ecosystem services, and increased species extinction rates. Ecosystem degradation, in turn, can exacerbate climate change by reducing the ability of ecosystems to sequester carbon and regulate the climate. Human societies are deeply dependent on biodiversity and ecosystem services for survival and quality of life, and more than half of the world's total gross domestic product — is moderately or highly dependent on nature.⁹ Thus, halting or reversing the destruction of natural resources is a core adaptive strategy and source of resilience.

The root causes of climate change, inequality, biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation are often interconnected, stemming from unsustainable consumption and production patterns, exploitation of natural resources, and inequitable distribution of wealth, income and power. Economic systems that prioritise short-term profit over long-term sustainability contribute to all four crises, perpetuating a cycle of accelerated climate change, environmental degradation and economic and social injustices.

The risks and stressors arising from these interconnected crises of climate change, inequality, biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation are multidimensional and mutually-reinforcing and put stress on and threaten to destabilise entire systems — like societies, economies and ecosystems — if not tackled in an integrated manner.

The first Global Stocktake (GST)¹⁰ on implementing the Paris Agreement emphasised that the global biodiversity and climate crises are interlinked and urgently need to be addressed together in the context of meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

SSN's strategy responds to this need for a holistic and multi-faceted approach that considers the interlinkages and tackles these major global crises in unison.



Women from the Beach Management Unit, who are working with KMFRI to pilot Catchgreen ropes in their seaweed farms, partially financed through SSN's Sustainable Manufacturing and Environmental Pollution (SMEP) programme

What does SSN mean by transformative climate-resilient development?

The current pace and scale of mitigation and adaptation efforts are insufficient to navigate the impacts of climate change, reduce social inequalities and avoid ecosystem collapse. To ensure development decisions lead to outcomes that are both sustainable and just for current and future generations, deliberate transformations are required across social, economic, and political structures and systems that create and reinforce climate vulnerability.

Transformative climate-resilient development requires that we move beyond incremental approaches alone and begin to address the root

causes of the climate, inequality and biodiversity crises through a systems approach and a greater emphasis on justice and equity.

We aim to ensure that climate-resilient interventions and actions lead to meaningful change that is in line with the needs of people and the ecosystems they are embedded within. Unlocking transformative climate-resilient development requires radical collaborations, across sectors, scales, actor groups and knowledge communities to leapfrog towards more just and sustainable development pathways.

Resilient societies, economies and ecosystems

Resilience is required within societies, economies and ecosystems to adapt and transform in the face of change and uncertainty.

SSN recognises the multi-dimensional nature of resilience, involving the capacity to absorb shocks, avoid social and ecological tipping points, strengthen adaptive and anticipatory capacities to navigate the unexpected, and critically, to respond to crises with transformative actions.

For SSN, resilience action must prioritise justice and enhance human well-being, especially of the most marginalised and climate-affected. Community-led action is core to resilient systems where those on the frontlines of shocks and stressors lead the design, implementation and monitoring of solutions, and these are deeply grounded in community capabilities

“ Resilience action must prioritise justice and enhance human well-being, especially of the most marginalised and climate-affected. ”

and needs. A key finding of the first GST is that when adaptation is informed and driven by local contexts, populations, and priorities, both the adequacy and the effectiveness of adaptation action and support are enhanced, and this can also promote transformational adaptation.

Our approach to resilience is underpinned by a perspective that brings together the social and

ecological dimensions of resilience.

The ecological dimension acknowledges that its support systems are not solely ecological, but are interconnected systems across scales of people, places and the environment. The social dimensions of resilience include people, societies, economies and institutions and the associated governance mechanisms of these

systems that operate across scales. This recognition broadens the understanding of resilience to focus on the long-term maintenance of desirable and healthy systems that are ecologically, culturally and socially shaped.

A framework for guiding global adaptation efforts and achieving the Paris Agreement's Global Goal on Adaptation was agreed at COP28. This United Arab Emirates (UAE) Framework for Global Climate Resilience

also reflects the need for a holistic approach to adaptation and resilience — presenting a range of high-level targets aimed at substantially reducing climate risk in key social, economic and environmental systems.

SSN also recognises equitable transitions to low-emissions futures as part of building climate resilience. Countries in the Global South also stand at a critical juncture in their development trajectories, facing the dual challenge of meeting urgent development needs for rapidly growing populations, such as supporting food security and responding to growing energy demand, while addressing the imperative to mitigate climate change. These countries can by-pass traditional fossil fuel intensive pathways by adopting low-emissions technologies and practices that can foster economic growth, enhance productivity and support job creation, while addressing climate change.

Given the rapid pace of development, urbanisation, and the growing exploration of crucial minerals, especially those vital for advancing renewable energy and battery technologies, low-emissions development is relevant to many key productive economic sectors, like waste management, industry and extractive industries, in addition to energy. Agriculture is also the foundation of many economies in Africa and the Global South, and climate-smart agricultural development can support adaptation, mitigation and food production, as well as protect and regenerate land and ecosystems.

Consequently, SSN supports integrated strategies that address adaptation and mitigation in support of resilient social and ecological systems that

enhance human well-being, advance justice, and preserve and regenerate nature. SSN will align our work with the Global Goal on Adaptation targets¹¹ as they are further refined and associated indicators are agreed for measuring their progress.

We assist countries in the Global South to access and mobilise the necessary resources, whether it is finance, technology, capabilities or knowledge, to enable this transition to just and equitable climate-resilient and low-emissions development pathways.

Means of implementation: Finance, capabilities and knowledge

The Paris Agreement's adherence to the principle of 'common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities' (CBDR-RC) acknowledges that while all countries must contribute to climate action, the extent of their responsibilities varies based on their national circumstances and historical contributions to climate change.

Developed countries, having historically emitted the most greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, have a duty under Article 9 of the Paris Agreement to provide the necessary finance, technology and capacity-building support ('means of implementation') to developing countries, particularly least developed and countries particularly vulnerable to climate change, to take effective climate change action through country-driven processes.

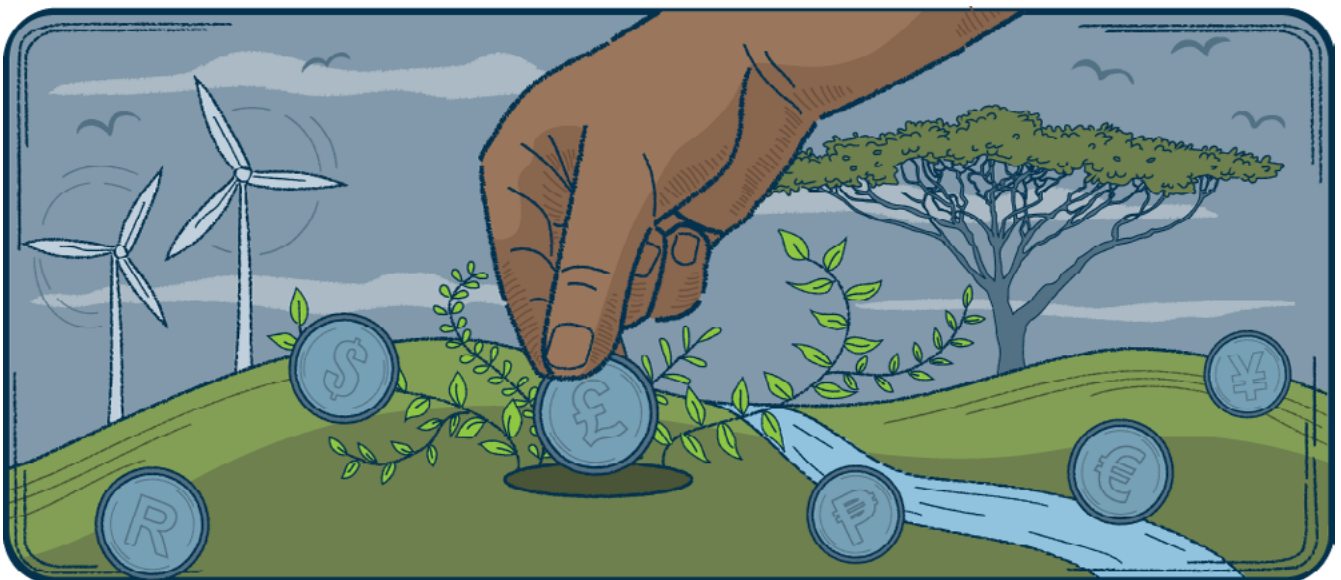


Figure 3: Finance, capabilities and knowledge

Most commitments communicated by developing countries in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) are conditional on receiving the necessary resources, including financial and technical. Without such support, these countries cannot make the critical investments required to transform their development pathways away from fossil fuel dependency and towards sustainable, resilient societies, economies and ecosystems.

Despite the urgent need for substantial financial resources to support climate adaptation and mitigation in these regions, there remains a significant shortfall between the funding required and what has been pledged or disbursed. An analysis done by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) shows developing countries require at least US\$ 5.8-5.9 trillion up until 2030 to implement their existing NDCs.¹²

Developed country Parties made a commitment at COP16 in 2009 to jointly mobilise US\$ 100 billion annually by 2020. A new goal, the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG), aims to provide at least US\$ 300 billion annually to developing countries by

2035. The UN Adaptation Gap Report 2024¹³ estimates the adaptation finance gap to be between US\$ 187 billion and US\$ 359 billion annually, underscoring the urgent need for scale up of climate financing.

Irrespective of the quantity, the quality of this funding is vital to ensure that Global South countries and communities can access finance that is accountable to locally-determined priorities and provided in more sustainable forms to avoid exacerbating existing debt burdens. Without deliberate and proactive attempts

to redirect and regulate flows of climate finance, achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement will remain unattainable.

The Paris Agreement (Article 2.1 (c)) calls for the alignment of financial flows in a way that is “consistent with a pathway to climate-resilient development”. This is core to achieving just climate action and enhancing the availability of financial flows that support investment in adaptation

and mitigation measures in developing countries that are already faced with the dual burden of managing climate impacts while striving to meet developmental goals. This context makes the gap in climate finance not only a barrier to effective and just climate action, but also a threat to equitable progress on attaining the goals of the Paris Agreement and enhanced resilience.

“**While access to climate finance poses significant challenges, it also presents opportunities for coordination and alignment across various financial streams, including biodiversity and just transitions.**

Means of implementation

SSN’s work to accelerate finance, capabilities and knowledge for transformative climate-resilient development, within equitable governance systems, seeks to promote the decisions taken by the UNFCCC and advance these “means of implementation” for climate action.

While the Global South holds immense potential to unlock knowledge, innovation and skills for achieving climate-resilient development, without richer countries

meeting the Article 9 Paris Agreement commitment and providing the necessary financial and technological resources, this potential will not be realised to enable climate action at the scale and pace required.

SSN’s seeks to ensure the combined contributions of finance, capabilities and knowledge empower local solutions and innovations, mobilise local expertise and achieve equitable outcomes under the UNFCCC framework.



AfCAP team and delegates visiting the Kenya Agricultural & Livestock Research Organisation (KALRO) and International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) Direct Seeded Rice field

While access to climate finance poses significant challenges, it also presents opportunities for coordination and alignment across various financial streams, including biodiversity and just transitions. To achieve effective climate action, it is therefore essential that climate finance goals and strategies are coherent and well-coordinated across various initiatives and international frameworks. For example, effective financing for the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework must be harmonised with climate finance strategies. Currently, the annual biodiversity finance amounts to US\$ 150 billion, but to fully implement an ambitious new framework — addressing ecosystem restoration, reducing species extinction risks, and protecting 30% of land, freshwater, and marine areas by 2030 – an additional US\$ 800 billion from private investment and at least US\$ 60 billion from public finance are needed each year.

Concurrently, as countries develop just transition finance frameworks and seek to better understand how to fund their transitions, there is a valuable opportunity to mainstream and coordinate transition finance with climate finance. This approach can contribute to transforming the financial system to more effectively support developing countries in their climate and sustainability efforts.

The reform of Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) is of particular importance, as MDBs are critical players in the climate and development finance landscapes, and their policies and operations can significantly influence the accessibility and effectiveness of climate finance. Enhancing the capacity of MDBs to support

the development of project pipelines in the Global South, aligning finance with local needs, and deploying innovative financial instruments that can reach local

scale, are essential steps. Through these, and other initiatives, we seek to enhance the accessibility, effectiveness and availability of climate finance for the Global South.

Capabilities and knowledge are also an essential ‘means’ for transformative climate-resilient development. Much knowledge already exists to tackle climate change, but there are gaps in effectively acting on that knowledge.

Often it is not relevant and accessible to those who need it. Moreover, social and political factors, including conflicting and diverse knowledge systems, institutional fragmentation and competing political priorities, hinder its use. SSN believes that knowledge brokers¹⁴ play an important role as intermediaries to bridge knowledge and action on climate change. They help navigate this complex environment of a range of sectors and stakeholders with different values, world views and perspectives, at multiple levels, as well as support making sense of the many trade-offs and intended and unintended consequences in climate-related decisions and actions.^{15 16}

SSN’s strategy seeks to drive the means of implementation forward: by enhancing availability and inclusive access to finance as well as the capabilities, innovation and knowledge needed for countries to meet their interlinked climate, development and biodiversity goals, and ensuring the governance systems through which these goals are advanced are equitable and just.

“ **SSN believes that knowledge brokers play an important role as intermediaries to bridge knowledge and action on climate change.** ”

Justice at the heart of transformative climate-resilient development

At its core, SSN's response to climate change is fundamentally about justice, and encompasses multiple dimensions. There are inherent injustices in those responsible for causing climate change, biodiversity loss and ecological degradation and how its impacts and the benefits from climate responses are distributed across different groups in society (distributional justice). According to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), countries in the Global South will have 15 times more victims of extreme events such as floods, droughts and wildfires than those in the Global North.¹⁷

Climate, biodiversity and development finance flows are not equitably distributed to climate-affected groups and countries. Carbon and biodiversity offsetting schemes largely benefit corporations, governments and existing vested interests as opposed to local communities, whose vulnerability is often further exacerbated when moved off land to create conservation areas or develop renewable energy.

Justice concerns also arise in our responses to climate change (procedural justice). Most decision-making for climate action and the implementation of solutions remains top-down (i.e., from national governments,

donors, financiers and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to those affected by climate change). In addition, the political and social realities that create unfavourable conditions for inclusion in climate action, mean that marginalised groups or politically unfavoured groups rarely have a say in climate decision-making and local, traditional and Indigenous knowledge and values are largely not recognised and elevated, alongside scientific understanding (recognitional justice).

Much of the marginalisation of these communities has been, and is still caused by, systemic, structural discrimination within countries and at regional and international levels. This also plays out within the multilateral system and results in barriers to meaningful participation of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in multilateral negotiations central to tackling the interlinked climate, inequality and biodiversity crises. In supporting transformative climate action, SSN supports transformative justice that seeks to address the underlying root causes of structural injustices,¹⁸ paying particular attention to norms related to (the absence of) gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) and the need for GESI-transformative approaches to climate action.

Using knowledge-brokering and partnership-building approaches, SSN works with like-minded organisations and movements to advance climate justice by amplifying voices and strengthening the agency and leadership of climate-affected communities towards realising people-centred and rights-based climate-resilient development. To do so, we focus on the recognitional, distributional and procedural dimensions of justice in our work (Figure 4).

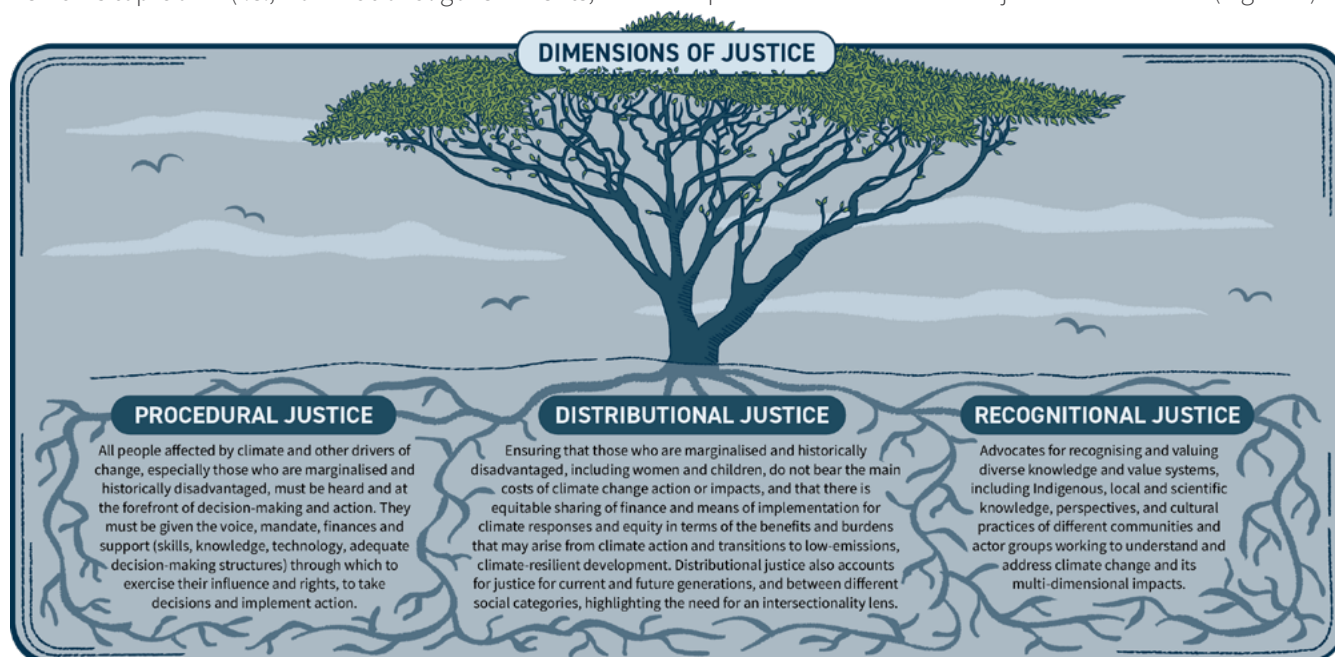


Figure 4: Dimensions of justice that SSN is concerned with: recognitional, distributional and procedural justice

SSN'S THEORY OF CHANGE:

Our four impact areas and long-term outcomes

SSN works in four interrelated impact areas, which we believe require targeted action and are integral to accelerating transformative climate-resilient development. These are the key focus areas or thematic priorities where we will concentrate our efforts over the next five years. We have set long-term outcomes for each of these, aligned with international climate, sustainable development and biodiversity and nature-related goals and frameworks. SSN seeks to develop programmes that deliver these outcomes and our strategy outlines our approach to this.

IMPACT AREA 1: Resilient systems

Long term
outcome:
**Resilient social
and ecological
systems in
a changing
climate**



IMPACT AREA 2: Finance availability and access

Long-term
outcome:
**Transformed
financial systems,
architectures and
flows that facilitate
appropriate and
inclusive access to
finance**



IMPACT AREA 3: Capabilities, innovation and knowledge

Long-term
outcome:
**Strengthened
capabilities through
innovation, learning
and leveraging
diverse knowledge
systems**



IMPACT AREA 4: Multi-level governance

Long-term
outcome:
**Inclusive multi-level
governance that
reflects the interests
and meaningful
contributions of
those in the Global
South**

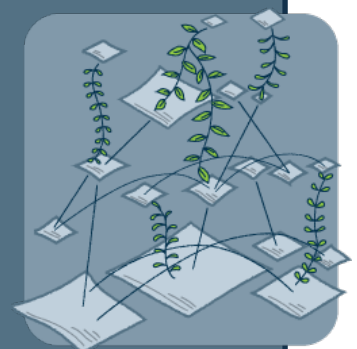


Figure 5: SSN's four impact areas

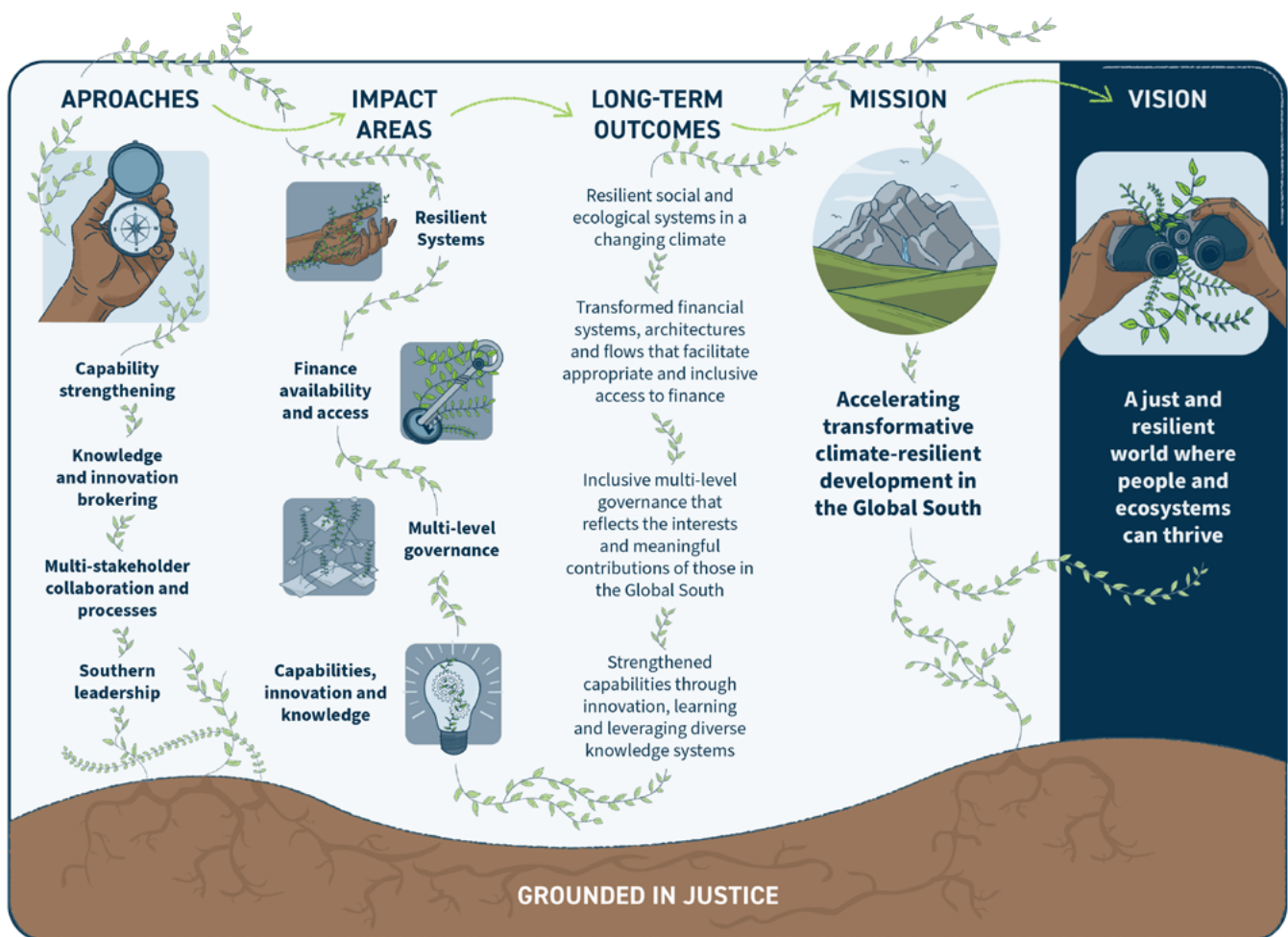


Figure 6: SSN's theory of change - see expanded version on page 42

These four impact areas are interrelated. Flourishing and healthy social and ecological systems are the bedrock of transformative climate-resilient development. These systems provide the foundation for sustainable livelihoods, protect against climate impacts, and support the well-being of both people and ecosystems.

For SSN, building resilient social and ecological systems requires transforming the 'means of implementation': how finance flows, especially to reach those who need it most on the frontlines of the climate crisis, and leveraging our collective and diverse capabilities, innovation and knowledge.

This is enabled by inclusive governance systems that provide the framework within which social and

ecological systems are managed, financial flows are directed, knowledge is co-created and equitable climate-resilient development is realised. Considerations of justice are embedded and cut across all these areas,

recognising the integral role justice plays in equitably transitioning to a resilient world where people and ecosystems thrive.

“ The Theory of Change also acknowledges that SSN — as an organisation — needs to change to deliver the vision and mission proposed. ”

The Theory of Change also acknowledges that SSN — as an organisation — needs to change to deliver the vision and mission proposed. In many aspects, the organisation forms the foundation upon which SSN employees are enabled to affect change in the world. While SSN has a 25-year track record behind it, there remains much work

to consolidate, coordinate and cultivate an effective organisation. Iterative two-year frameworks will be used to move the organisation's development in step with the strategy.

Aligning to global and regional goals

We are primarily guided by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Paris Agreement, the Global Goal on Adaptation and the associated UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience, and the SDGs. However, in support of our integrated approach to climate resilience, we also seek to align with the other Rio Conventions of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the CBD's Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

At the regional level within Africa we are guided by the objectives and recommendations of the African Union's (AU's) Agenda 2063 and the climate-resilient development approach set out in the AU's Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022-2032), in particular the calls for a people-centred approach, acknowledging and responding to intersectionality,¹⁹ being African-led and owned as well as the strategic interventions focussed on: (1) Strengthening governance and policy; (2) Adopting pathways towards transformative climate-resilient development; and (3) Enhancing means of implementation towards climate-resilient development.

Impact area 1: Resilient systems

Long-term outcome: Resilient social and ecological systems in a changing climate

SSN aspires to support holistic strategies that strengthen resilience across and between social and ecological systems (acknowledging their interdependence):

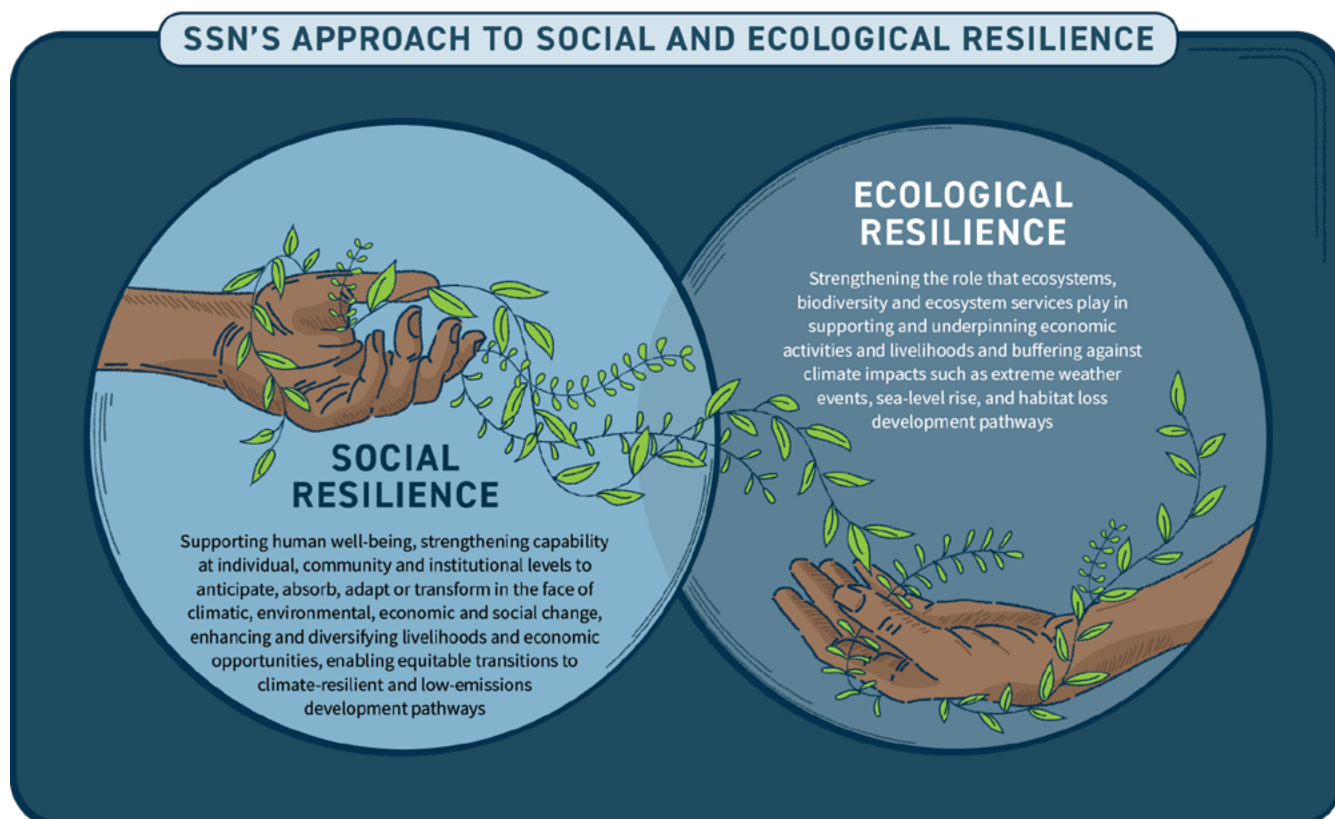


Figure 7: SSN's approach to resilience that includes social and ecological dimensions

SSN delivers programmes that work across scales to strengthen resilience. Approaches include the promotion of sustainable and lasting impact in the following areas:

- community-led adaptation and resilience action;
- gender equality and social inclusion (GESI);
- ecosystem-based approaches;
- evidence-based adaptation and resilience actions;
- circular business models and cleaner production technologies; and
- low-emissions and climate-resilient development pathways.

While the nature of programmes that SSN implements may differ, fundamentally we seek to ensure that impacts are lasting and sustainable, meaning that solutions should first and foremost have local ownership, as well as be technically feasible and economically viable in the long term. Driving women's

leadership and GESI-responsive and transformative climate-resilient development is fundamental to our work related to strengthening the resilience of social and ecological systems.

We see co-benefits to resilience outcomes with the adoption of low-emissions development pathways. For example, enhancing access to clean, sustainable energy is a driver of economic development and transformation, as well as increasing agricultural productivity to achieve and maintain food security. The Agriculture, Forestry, and Other Land Use (AFOLU) sector is important to the African continent and yet remains amongst the highest sources of emissions for the region. Preserving and restoring land, soil and water resources alongside agricultural practice can support both improving food yields, while enhancing resilience and serving as key carbon sinks.

SSN in practice: The Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN)

The Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN) accelerates equitable, financed and ecosystem-system based action on climate change that is locally-led and supports the voice and climate leadership of marginalised groups.

The initiative

CDKN is a partnership of Southern leaders, implementing a global programme that drives climate-resilient action across public, civil society and private sectors in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Building on 14 years of working in the global South, CDKN mobilises knowledge, capabilities and leadership through diverse knowledge co-production processes to improve the well-being and resilience of the most climate-affected people.

Three priority action areas drive CDKN's work at global, regional, national and local levels:

- Supporting the integration of gender equity and social inclusion (GESI) in policies and practice for climate-resilient development

- Improving access to equitable and transformative finance that enables locally-led climate-resilient development
- Strengthening the implementation of just, equitable and locally-led ecosystem-based approaches for adaptation.

Expected/realised impacts

CDKN has had 1.5 million visits to its website and produced 820 knowledge products. Since 2018, it has engaged over 13,000 key actors in the global South in its knowledge sharing and capacity strengthening activities, 54% of whom were women. In the last year alone, 515 organisations have been involved in CDKN's work. More recently it has kicked off 11 Knowledge-to-Action projects through microgrants supporting locally-led adaptation in eight countries in Africa and Latin America.

SSN in practice: African Climate Action Partnership (AfCAP)

SSN manages the African Climate Action Partnership (AfCAP) secretariat, which brings together representatives from governments, civil society and the private sector working to advance climate-resilient and low-emission development strategies across the continent and a range of crucial sectors ranging from energy access to agriculture.

The initiative

With a strong focus on knowledge sharing and peer-learning, SSN has been able to leverage its knowledge brokering approach to bring together African expertise in energy access, and AFOLU to design and implement sectoral strategies aligned to country NDCs and LT-LEDs. Bringing together scientists, practitioners and policymakers is crucial to ensuring that countries harness capabilities from within the continent to develop NDCs and LT-LEDs that respond to local contexts and needs.

SSN convenes communities of practice for minigrids, sustainable livestock, paddy rice cultivation, and soil organic carbon. These communities of practice provide a space for

knowledge sharing, peer learning as well as co-design and implementation of LT-LEDs.

They also provide a space for fostering and promoting African expertise and capability.

Expected/realised impacts

AfCAP has played a key role in enabling countries to build relationships and greater agency to independently develop LT-LEDs that serve as long-term frameworks to inform their subsequent NDC revisions.

Further, it has enabled countries to strengthen sectoral targets for energy and agriculture in NDC and LT-LEDs through more inclusive and endogenous evidence bases, with clear implementation pathways.

How SSN seeks to strengthen resilient social and ecological systems in a changing climate systems

Key strategic entry points for SSN

Community-led adaptation and resilience: SSN supports local communities to design, implement, govern and monitor local adaptation and resilience initiatives that enhance livelihoods, informed by local and Indigenous knowledge. We provide small and micro grants directly to community-based organisations.

Women's leadership and gender equality and social inclusion: SSN aims to integrate GESI across our work and supports government, funders, civil society and private sector actors to do the same. We aspire to support GESI-transformative approaches as far as possible, focussed on shifting gender

norms and systemic causes of discrimination. We focus on redressing inequalities in the risks and vulnerabilities of climate change as well as empowering women and girls in the context of the climate, inequality and biodiversity crises.

Local knowledge and expertise: SSN drives interventions that enable local knowledge, expertise and capabilities, especially African expertise, to surface and inform a deeper understanding of key enablers of transformative change in the Global South context. This includes issues related to climate- and nature-positive resilience practices and adaptation action, resource and technology mobilisation, African perspectives on just transitions, and clean and efficient technologies and industries.

Young people: SSN supports young people as climate leaders and change agents of innovative social and ecological resilience actions. SSN has a particular focus on young people in Africa given the current and future demographic of the continent.

Cross-sector and cross-scale action and Southern leadership: SSN breaks down silos and strengthens partnerships and collaboration across scales and between different sectors linked to nature, agriculture/food, water, disaster risk reduction, infrastructure, cities/human settlements, amongst other sectors, for more integrated and inclusive climate responses. At the global level, SSN promotes Southern thought leadership on adaptation and resilience.

Business models for resilience: SSN advocates and promotes circular systems and circular business models: By slowing resource loops and reducing rates of resource extraction, waste and emissions, the pressure on social and ecological systems is reduced. SSN has implemented programmes that identify, fund and support the piloting and scaling of circular business models and technology-based solutions for cleaner production. Projects are supported to demonstrate technical feasibility and commercial viability.

SSN in practice: Sustainable Manufacturing and Environmental Pollution (SMEP)

Funded by the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), SMEP was established in 2018 to address pollution caused by the manufacturing sector and plastics pollution in target countries in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) is a technical delivery partner and SMEP has a specific focus on solutions for uptake by the private sector.

The initiative

SSN, through SMEP, manages more than 25 selected research and pilot demonstration projects to test and demonstrate scalable cleaner technologies and circular business models. The programme identifies viable and commercially feasible solutions to reduce the footprint of manufacturing by preventing pollution at various stages including end-of-pipe. The pilot projects target issues that are most concerning for human and environmental health, and test solutions that have a potential for wider market uptake.

In the textiles sector, projects in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Uganda address key issues within the value chain including textile waste recycling, water pollution and reuse, and upscaling natural fibres that replace synthetics. Some tanneries projects test solutions to promote human rights and environmental due diligence (HREDD) in small tanneries, while other pilots test traceability within the value chain and chemical substitutions in the tanning process, paving the way for reprocessing the solid wastes. The circular business model projects in Kenya demonstrate the business case for a range of solutions for organic waste and water treatment and reuse.

Waste-to-value solutions (such as biogas, insect protein, biochar, compost, or biomass waste-to-fibre solutions) have strong GHG mitigation potential and many of these interventions produce by-products for new value chains, including the regenerative agriculture value chains.

Expected/realised impacts

The programme aims to achieve the uptake of pollution mitigation solutions, supported by evidence and policy interventions. These outcomes, and co-benefits, such as direct pollution reduction results, GHG emissions reduction, and GESI impacts are tracked and reported on. Business model maturity is tracked through indicators such as investment secured, new partnerships and new markets. Policy uptake results to date are the inclusion of non-plastic substitutes in the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) draft and in the World Trade Organization (WTO) Dialogue on Plastics Statements; an advanced draft bill to ban unnecessary single use plastics in the East African Community; and various peer-reviewed articles published in scientific journals.

Promoting wider uptake may involve several interventions, including assisting to develop markets for new products, addressing barriers such as trade tariffs or encouraging incentives such as access to finance.

Policy development and implementation: SSN aims to support the development and implementation of climate- and nature-positive resilience policies and plans at sub-national and national levels, such as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and their financing strategies, National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and Long Term Low Emission Development Strategies (LT-LEDS).

Impactful donor programming and investment: SSN supports Global North governments towards meeting their pledges to provide quality and quantity

climate finance to the Global South related to climate, environment and nature investments, facilitating rapid, on-demand technical assistance by local experts.



The CLEAN Helpdesk consortium partners and FCDO during a three-day planning workshop

SSN in practice:

The Climate, Environment and Nature (CLEAN) Helpdesk

The Climate, Environment and Nature (CLEAN) Helpdesk is a Foreign Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO) funded technical assistance facility, created to support UK government officials with all climate, environment and nature-related queries. It is a flexible, demand-led, call-down facility for technical advice led and implemented by SSN in partnership with ODI, Paul Watkiss Associates and Social Development Direct.

The CLEAN Helpdesk has been established to improve UK government capacity to integrate climate, environment and nature mainstreaming, including International Climate Finance (ICF), to improve outcomes for people and nature through bilateral aid projects undertaken/funded by the UK International Development. The programme is committed to promoting gender equity, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) in its work, recognising its importance for sustainable climate, environment and nature action. It builds on and succeeds the Climate Mainstreaming Facility (CMF).

The initiative

The CLEAN Helpdesk functions as a one-stop-shop online platform for accessing UK-funded technical assistance programmes, providing support for the effective allocation of ICF funds to Official Development Assistance (ODA) projects while guiding officials to the most suitable resources for their needs.

Expected/realised impacts

The CLEAN Helpdesk is supporting the long-term delivery of the UK's Paris-aligned International Development Strategy climate and nature commitments. It has also improved the quality and quantity of UK-funded programming to policy-level development by mainstreaming climate, environment and nature and ensuring alignment to the Paris Agreement in its climate finance and wider Official Development Assistance (ODA) portfolio.

Impact area 2: Finance availability and access

Long-term outcome: Transformed financial architectures, systems and flows that facilitate appropriate and inclusive access to finance

SSN advocates for the transformation and harmonisation of global, regional and national climate, biodiversity and development financial architectures to accelerate appropriate and inclusive finance for adaptation and resilience action. Existing debt burdens and fiscal constraints of countries in the Global South necessitate improved modalities of finance provision, shifting from debt-based finance to more sustainable forms, such as grants. Moreover, finance is not reaching the local level or getting into the hands of the most marginalised and climate affected, where it is needed the most.

SSN seeks to promote the decisions taken by the UNFCCC and ensure that financial flows are just, equitable and aligned with climate-resilient development pathways. Our goal is to make resources for climate action more accessible at the local level, foster cross-scale partnerships and collaborations, and support development policies, strategies and investment plans that align with sustainable and climate-resilient

development.

We recognise that the design of mechanisms to drive means of implementation forward needs to be transformative in nature. For us, this means that those requiring the most urgent support, especially marginalised and climate-affected communities at local levels, are able to access high-quality and sufficient resources necessary for building their resilience.

SSN will work with the most climate-affected groups/communities and provide requested capability-strengthening activities to: (1) access long-term and sustainable finance for community-led interventions, (2) engage and influence key national, regional and international finance

decision-making spaces, and (3) advance innovations and adoption of appropriate finance solutions, modalities and mechanisms that can accelerate the flow of finance to the local level.

“ **SSN advocates for the transformation and harmonisation of global, regional and national climate, biodiversity and development financial architectures**

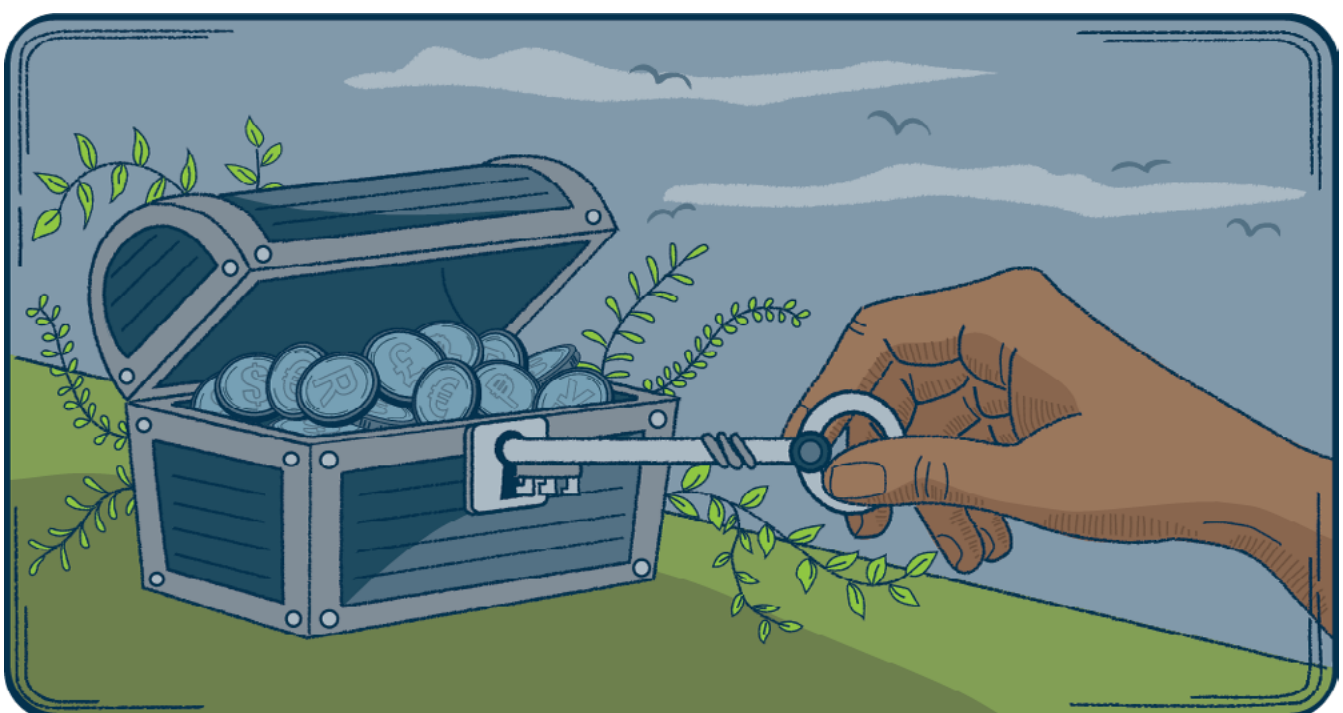


Figure 8: Finance availability and access

SSN's strategic approach to the required system transformations that underpin accessibility and availability of appropriate finance — across geographies, scales and stakeholder groups — requires deep engagement with both sources of finance as well as those seeking finance. Through our programmes, SSN seeks to engage and influence processes at the multilateral, national and local level to enhance the scale and accessibility of finance.

Transformative finance for SSN encompasses a multifaceted approach:

01 Increasing both the quantity and quality of resources: Ensuring that sufficient funds are available and that these funds are provided in ways that are easily accessible, appropriate, inclusive and sustainable.

02 Ensuring accountability and transparency: Implementing robust mechanisms for monitoring, reporting, and verifying the use of climate finance to ensure it reaches the intended beneficiaries and those most in need and achieves the desired outcomes.

03 Utilising and supporting local and national mechanisms: Prioritising the use of local and national institutions for implementing climate finance and moving away from a reliance on development partners, thereby strengthening their capacity and ensuring that the finance is contextually-appropriate and effective.

04 Harmonising the mobilisation of and access to finance: Clarifying and simplifying the intersections of the climate, biodiversity and development finance landscapes, across scales and geographies, to more efficiently and effectively respond to local, national, regional and global priorities, using the opportunity (of grant finance in particular) to leverage other resources and build a longer-term, local, sustainable financing architecture.



SSN speaking on unlocking finance for locally-led climate action at COP27 (top). SSN engaging in the Resilience Hub at COP29 (middle). SSN team who supported the development of South Africa's First Biennial Transparency Report (SABTR1) (bottom).

SSN in practice:

Aligning Financial Flows with the Paris Agreement in Africa (AFF)

The Aligning Financial Flows with the Paris Agreement in Africa (AFF) programme, led by SSN, helps drive sustainable development in Africa through operationalising Article 2.1(c) of the Paris Agreement and transforming financial flows to foster climate resilience across the continent.

African economies still need to identify pathways to align financial flows with the goals of the Paris Agreement, tailored to their national circumstances, to promote sustainable development and build climate resilience. The AFF programme creates evidence-based pathways to operationalise Article 2.1(c) of the Paris Agreement (concerned with aligning financial flows with low-emission and climate-resilient development pathways). Focussing on countries like Ethiopia, Mozambique, and South Africa, each with unique challenges, the AFF seeks to mitigate risks from carbon-intensive investments, while promoting climate-resilient economic growth.

The initiative

SSN conducts rigorous economic research and engages stakeholders to develop national-level pathway papers. These papers propose actionable strategies to redirect financial flows towards low-carbon and climate-resilient investments. The programme fosters inclusion and collective ownership through knowledge exchange forums and regional dialogues among African countries to ensure strategies are tailored to local economic contexts.

Expected/realised impacts

The AFF programme empowers African countries to enhance their NDCs with ambitious climate targets supported by Article 2.1(c) implementation. Through advocating for sustainable finance mechanisms and leveraging the Paris Agreement, the AFF stimulates investments in renewable energy, infrastructure and climate adaptation.

How SSN seeks to influence the transformation of financial architectures, systems and flows

Key strategic entry points for SSN

Research and policy analysis: SSN undertakes research and policy analysis to inform the development of evidence-based and context-specific national climate policies and plans. This research helps identify the most effective strategies for mobilising and utilising climate finance and ensuring that finance reaches the local level.

Policy development and harmonisation: SSN works with key institutions to develop policies, strategies, and investment plans that align with climate-resilient development pathways. This includes supporting governments in integrating climate finance into NDCs and establishing national climate funds.

Finance for community-led adaptation and resilience action: SSN supports efforts, across scales, to advance understanding and practice of easily accessible, flexible, predictable and patient financing for inclusive and transformative adaptation and resilience at the local level. We engage both sources of finance and those seeking finance to leverage, blend and accelerate

SSN in practice: Green Accountability Platform

The Green Accountability Platform project is implemented by a Consortium led by the World Resources Institute (WRI), SSN, and the Huairou Commission. The Global Partnership for Social Accountability, hosted by the World Bank, launched the Platform to strengthen civil society actors' capacity, including vulnerable communities, to participate in and influence climate policy through social accountability for climate action.

The initiative's rationale stems from the understanding that current public climate financing lacks clear transparency guidelines, accountability mechanisms, and anchoring within local communities and civil society. Civil society has a critical role in ensuring that funding reflects the identified needs of diverse groups, reaches vulnerable communities with verified end-use, and, at a minimum, follows no-harm principles.

The initiative

SSN's contribution to the project is the establishment of a community of practice that provides a peer-to-peer learning and knowledge-sharing platform, identifies scalable green accountability social innovations, and implements coalition-building strategies for a core group of practitioners. Additionally, one of the aims of the community of practice is to provide a platform for green accountability leaders and strategic actors to promote green accountability in strategic spaces.

Expected/realised impacts

The Platform will provide grants, tools and shared learning, and support coalition building for civil society organisations working at the grassroots and national levels. It will also connect with national and global networks working to strengthen climate governance and support green accountability.

a variety of financial resources to adequately respond to local priorities and needs. SSN sees local actors as crucial, and seeks a paradigm shift in the role that local actors play in conceptualising and implementing solutions when seeking finance. Local actors need to be adequately recognised across all scales of the existing climate, biodiversity and development finance architecture, and not seen as merely the beneficiaries of financial flows for adaptation and resilience. SSN will act as an ally to local actors with regards to enhancing their influencing potential, including through amplifying their voices, solutions and needs in national, regional and global finance decision-making spaces, for example UNFCCC and CBD Conferences of the Parties (COPs).

Capability strengthening initiatives: SSN provides targeted capability strengthening programmes to enhance the understanding of climate finance frameworks among local financial institutions, policymakers, and civil society organisations. This includes training and advisory support on accessing international climate funds, developing bankable

projects, and implementing effective monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

Inclusive dialogue and decision-making: SSN facilitates knowledge exchange forums, regional dialogues, and participatory processes to ensure that Global South perspectives, particularly meaningful and authentic amplification of local and lesser-heard voices and constituencies, are included in international climate finance discussions and inform and influence decision-making processes across scales.



Participants in the Step Change learning review in Arusha, Tanzania (courtesy of the IDRC)

SSN in practice:

Supporting Ethiopia's climate finance access efforts

For the past 10 years, SSN has been implementing technical assistance projects in Ethiopia predominantly focussed on supporting the relevant national institutions in accessing climate finance from international climate funds.

The initiative

SSN provided long-term technical support to Ethiopia's Ministry of Finance (MOF) and national climate change fund (CRGE Facility) in mobilising resources for implementing climate action.

This assistance was financed by a number of donors, including the International Climate Initiative (IKI) of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands (MoFA), and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) of the UK. Moreover, it was implemented in partnership with several technical institutions, including the Perspectives Climate Group, the UN Development Programme Ethiopia Country Office and the Global Green Growth Institute Ethiopia.

Expected/realised impacts

Key highlights of this support over the years have been:

- The MOF's successful accreditation to directly access funds from the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and Adaptation Fund (AF).
- The MOF's accreditation level upgraded to a medium-sized project access category of the GCF, i.e. US\$ 50-250 million per project.
- Approval of a US\$ 50 million GCF-funded project in 2016-2017: Responding to the increasing risk of drought: building gender-responsive resilience of the most vulnerable communities, finishing in

August 2025. This project provides rural communities with critical water supplies for year-round drinking water and small-scale irrigation to address risks of drought and other climate impacts.

- Implementation of a US\$ 10 million AF-funded Climate Smart Integrated Rural Development Project, between 2017 and 2021. This project carried out various integrated water, agriculture and natural resources management activities at the local level.

SSN is also part of the technical team supporting the US\$ 50 million project MOF proposal: Climate-resilient community access to safe water powered by renewable energy in drought-vulnerable regions of Ethiopia. This project, due for GCF Board approval in October 2024, seeks to strengthen rural climate resilience in Ethiopia through sustainable extraction of water from deep aquifers using solar water pumps for productive and potable use in semi/arid South Western Oromia and North Eastern Amhara regions.

Reflecting on this support, Mr. Zerihun Getu Mekuria, coordinator of the CRGE Facility, said: "This coordination and technical support was instrumental in helping us translate some of our climate resilience and green growth ambitions to tangible actions on the ground and at the local level. Going forward we will be happy to further strengthen strategic support and help build the capabilities of experts at the national, regional and woreda levels".

Impact area 3: Capabilities, innovation and knowledge

Long-term outcome: Strengthened capabilities through innovation, learning and leveraging diverse knowledge systems

SSN's strategy is to advance inclusive, context-relevant and participatory co-creation processes that enable local actors to drive transformative change in climate-resilient development. We believe this can most effectively strengthen and unlock collective capabilities and knowledge and innovation for more equitable, accepted and co-owned policies and responses. The Sixth IPCC Synthesis Report (2023)²⁰ shows how education and information programmes, the arts, Indigenous and local knowledge and citizen science are heightening understanding of climate risks, raising awareness and influencing behaviours on climate change.

Decision-makers in all their diversity - from community and civil society leaders to local and national government officials - need actionable

knowledge and research on climate science, impacts, vulnerabilities and responses to make informed development, livelihood, policy and investment choices. In brokering this knowledge and supporting evidence-based climate action, SSN advocates for a shift in what is accepted and understood as 'evidence', valuing Indigenous, local and experiential learning equally alongside scientific and academic evidence.

“ SSN's strategy is to advance inclusive, context-relevant and participatory co-creation processes that enable local actors to drive transformative change in climate-resilient development. ”

Frontline community champions and organisations experiencing the harshest impacts of climate change, habitat degradation and exploitation of natural resources, are not waiting to build their resilience and are leading adaptation and resilience responses. They offer invaluable knowledge and expertise into equitable and transformative

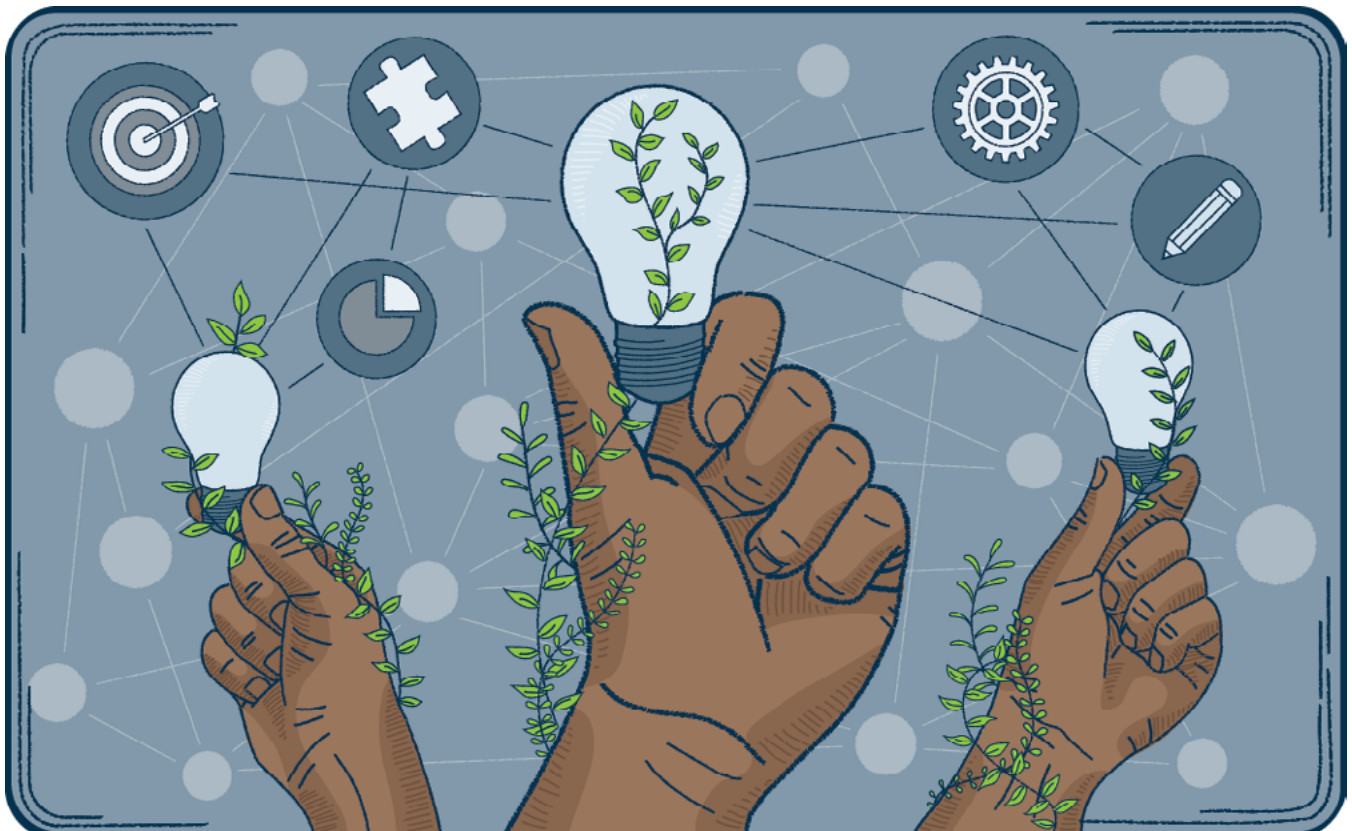


Figure 9: Capabilities, innovation and knowledge

strategies that need to be further shared and supported. At the same time, consideration of longer-term climate change through scientific evidence and modelling needs to also inform resilience responses so that they can be robust to future changes.

SSN focuses on enabling collaborative and equitable partnerships between institutions, communities, local researchers and practitioners and policymakers, specifically aimed at strengthening local and Southern-based expertise and capability. Young people, including entrepreneurs, activists and artists, are using their talents and creative energy to raise awareness about climate change, organise campaigns and movements to engage their peers, harness the power of social media

and develop new climate and environment focussed businesses and start-ups.

Knowledge and capabilities can also be mobilised at global scales, with countries in the Global South sharing knowledge, tools, capacities and strategies with each other. Fostering South-South learning and leveraging collective knowledge and resources is a core strategy for SSN, as these collaborative efforts can strengthen regional capabilities, enhance ownership, build solidarity, transfer innovative technologies and practices among countries with similar contexts and challenges, and amplify the impact of initiatives.

SSN in practice: Adaptation Research Alliance (ARA)

SSN hosted the secretariat of the Adaptation Research Alliance (ARA) whose mission is to accelerate and scale investments in action-oriented research that addresses the pressing knowledge needs for adaptation and resilience of the most vulnerable, strengthen capability at all stages from research to action, and promote greater global learning.

Developing climate adaptation programmes and adaptation knowledge has historically been top down, with interventions created and funded by the North, and anecdotal input provided from those at risk in the South. The ARA, through co-creation, seeks to enable the incubation of new action research activities and programmes, and contribute to evidence-based, societally-impactful programmes that increase climate resilience, especially in the Global South.

The initiative

The ARA is implementing several co-creation initiatives on smallholder agriculture (with AGNES and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation), nature-based solutions (with UKRI), LDC university capacity for supporting adaptation actions (with Interfer) and urban resilience (with IIED). All initiatives include co-creation with diverse stakeholders to generate new and improved knowledge, improve the links between research and action, bring on-the-ground needs to the forefront of programme and activity design, and create an enabling environment for effective collective action on climate adaptation.

Expected/realised impacts

The ARA's co-creation process has resulted in a £9.5mil programme on Equitable Nature-based Climate Resilience in sub-Saharan Africa. It developed a scoping phase to co-create a suite of fundable interventions on smallholder agriculture in Kenya and Nigeria for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. A concept for a three-component programme has been co-created amongst 199 actors within the LDC university spaces. The SECURE framework/tool provides an evidence-based pathway for strategic co-creation of contextually-relevant and effective urban resilience solutions.

How SSN seeks to strengthen capabilities and unlock innovation, learning and diverse knowledge systems

Key strategic entry points for SSN

Knowledge and innovation brokering: SSN drives knowledge-into-action by enabling better access to information, tailoring and packaging information to ensure it is relevant to target audiences, supporting knowledge co-creation, and advancing innovation to bring about fundamental shifts to our practices and systems. SSN collaborates with other knowledge brokers to learn from each other and mutually enhance our capabilities.

Creative knowledge brokering tools: SSN encourages the use of innovative ways to share knowledge and enhance climate literacy, such as games, virtual reality experiences, artificial intelligence, theatre and traditional song, amongst many others.

Demonstrating and scaling innovation: SSN demonstrates and tests new resilience solutions and technologies, for example alternative business models for cleaner production, and shares this evidence and learning to encourage wider uptake.

Inclusive and evidence-based decision-making: SSN supports participatory multi-stakeholder collaborations and processes that mobilise diverse forms of evidence for more informed, appropriate and co-owned policies, plans and programmes.

Action-oriented and Southern-led research: SSN works with partners and through networks and programmes such as the Adaptation Research Alliance (ARA) and the Climate Adaptation and Resilience (CLARE) programme to shift the paradigm of research to ensure it is radically collaborative, empowers researchers, research institutions and universities in the Global South and provides long-lasting, tangible impacts.

Science-policy interlinkages: SSN engages in science-policy assessment processes like the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and Intergovernmental

Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) to ensure the best-available science is informing adaptation and resilience action. We package and communicate this science in accessible formats for a range of audiences so that it is actionable and relevant to their context.

Capabilities of young people: SSN enables the new generation of climate leaders and innovators to unlock their talents, skills, technologies and knowledge through climate- and environment-focussed entrepreneurship, career development and mentorship programmes.

Intentional learning and innovation: SSN convenes learning processes on a range of topics that are creative, engaging and sustained. These intentional learning processes synthesise best practices, foster South-South and South-North learning and sharing across regional contexts and help to scale impacts.



SSN staff attending the first Green Climate Fund (GCF) Structured Dialogue with Africa

SSN in practice: Climate Adaptation and Resilience (CLARE) Research for Impact (R4I) Hub

SSN is supporting 19 adaptation and resilience research projects across Africa and Asia to achieve research for impact (R4I) by building skills in a range of knowledge brokering approaches, connecting peers and synthesising cross-programme learning.

All projects of the Climate Adaptation and Resilience (CLARE) programme are committed to co-creation approaches but, as this is a new method for some, there is a need to build new skills and share best practices. The R4I Hub offers support across the CLARE programme and at project level to ensure that projects have a good R4I plan in place, have access to knowledge on innovative approaches and best practices, and build specific skills in knowledge brokering.

The initiative

This support is delivered through coordinating a peer learning community (R4I working group) and specific capacity support options, such as a workshop on knowledge brokering (May 2024), regular peer sharing sessions (2023-2025) and direct mentorship to build specific skills (2024-25).

Expected/realised impacts

Research projects build new skills to enable them to co-create solutions with stakeholders that are better suited to local context and deliver greater benefits for those intended to benefit from and use the research.



Participants sharing learnings about the principles of co-creation during a CLARE engagement (top). CLARE knowledge brokering field trip in Nairobi, Kenya (bottom-left). SSN staff during a plenary session at a Global Climate Action Partnership (GCAP) workshop (bottom-right).

Impact area 4: Multi-level governance

Long-term outcome: Inclusive multi-level governance, reflecting the interests and meaningful contributions of those in the global South

Responding to the interlinked climate, inequality and biodiversity crises requires a fundamental shift in our governance systems at all scales. Given the inherently global nature of these challenges, responding effectively requires a well-functioning inclusive global governance system that enables member states to do their part and mobilise collective action by committing resources, delivering results and fostering mutual accountability. The effectiveness of the different Rio Conventions: the UNFCCC, the CBD, the UNCCD and aligned IPCC and IPBES processes depends on the strength of international cooperation and multilateralism.

The UN Secretary-General António Guterres calls²¹ for inclusive and effective multilateralism to address 21st-century challenges. Inclusive multilateralism provides for a stronger voice for Global South countries in global

decision-making. It also supports a more integrated approach to multilateral governance. The first GST²² (para 163) encourages cooperation in implementing other related multilateral environmental conventions and agreements, especially under the Rio Conventions, to achieve the Paris Agreement and SDGs.

Current climate governance does not adequately support inclusive and integrated planning, and locally-shaped solutions. Civic space is shrinking globally and nationally, limiting the voice and influence of civil society, including on climate and biodiversity action.

SSN aspires to support a wide range of diverse actors to access and shape transformative multi-level governance at different decision-making scales, such as local government, civil society, local and

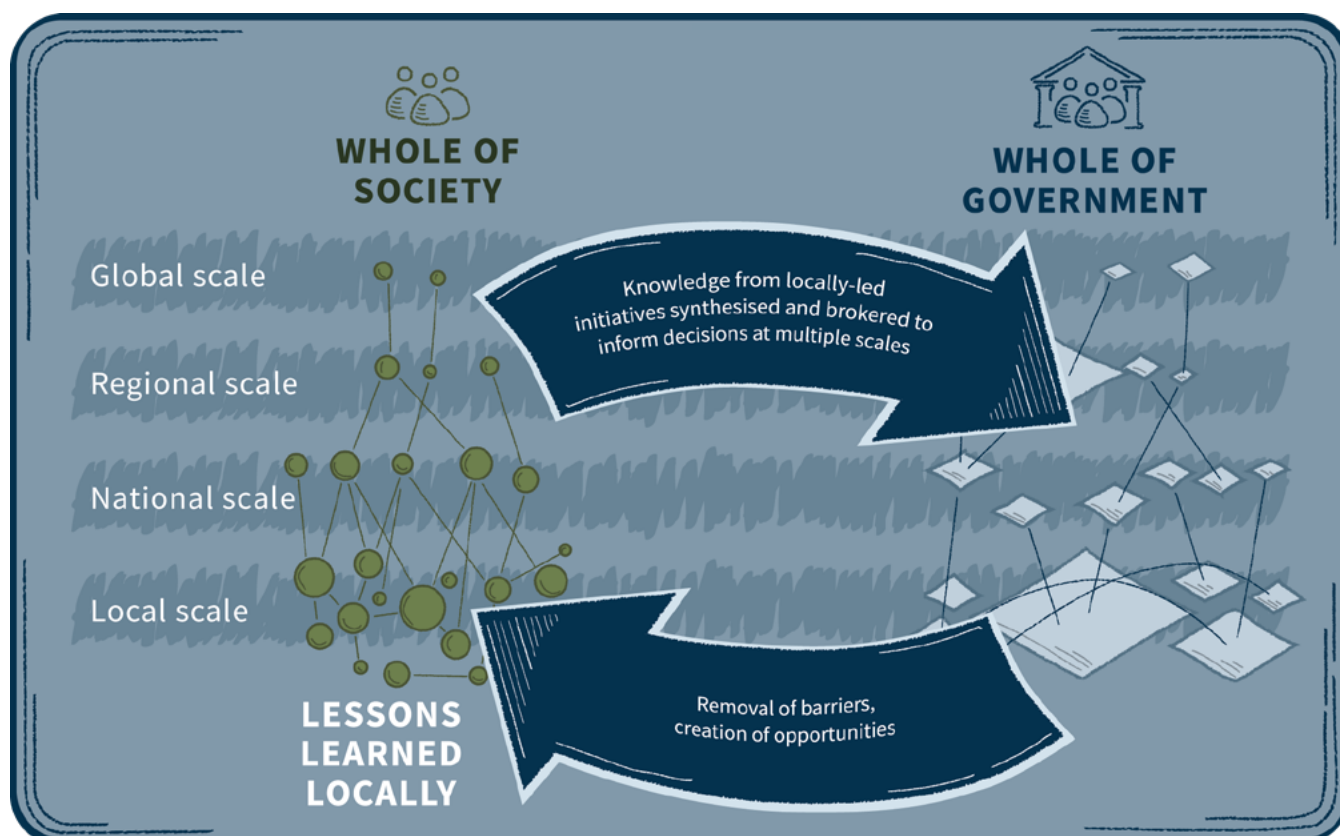


Figure 10: Transformative climate-resilient development requires connections between ‘whole of society’ and ‘whole of government’ working through inclusive multi-level governance. Adapted from Bulkeley et al. 2023²³

SSN in action: Voices for Just Climate Action (VCA)

Under the Voices for Just Climate Action (VCA) programme, SSN works with five other alliance partners across seven countries in the Global South to vest the power, resources and decision-making around sustainable climate action in the hands of those who are most adversely affected, and best placed to develop and implement it.

The initiative

VCA has sought to disrupt and reshape the power dynamics that have presided over historical inequalities and power structures by bringing together, capacitating and amplifying the voices of diverse civil society actors who have thus far been excluded, and yet hold the key to sustainable action to confront the climate crisis. By building and supporting networks of support and solidarity, VCA has sought to support a stronger voice, provide for a different narrative and secure the necessary space for civil society to develop and articulate climate solutions that are both locally-shaped and locally-relevant, as well as justly and equitably funded.

Expected/realised impacts

Locally-shaped solutions facilitated by local actors, forming new, unusual and disruptive connections across rural and urban divides, with increased leadership by women. An expanded civic space that allows for inclusive articulation of legitimate local interests in key spaces where political deliberations take place and financial decisions are taken. Lastly, building solidarity and capacity across like-minded movements to influence the necessary changes in the global climate finance architecture that will allow for greater flows directed towards locally-led solutions. To date, VCA has implemented more than 200 small and medium-sized grants to local civil society actors in seven countries.

grassroots movements, and especially those most marginalised and affected by climate change, environmental degradation and socio-economic marginalisation.

More inclusive governance systems are those that are transparent, transdisciplinary, accessible, and accountable, and build trust. Inclusive multi-level governance also supports collective learning and diverse partnerships and collaboration across

society and sectors of government to foster cross-sectoral responses and find synergies in transformative climate-resilient development.²⁴

Supportive and inclusive governance systems help navigate the complex trade-offs between development pathways and options and surface the contested values and interests that underpin different choices in identifying the multiple pathways towards climate-resilient development.



VCA alliance partners' meeting in Tunisia for cross-country and cross-organisational exchanges, strategising, and reflections on programmes' collective impacts

How SSN seeks to enable inclusive multi-level governance

SSN has two main approaches to enabling transformative governance for adaptation and resilience: driving inclusive and effective multilateralism and whole-of-society approaches.

Key strategic entry points for SSN

Inclusive and effective multilateralism

Mobilising knowledge and strengthening the capabilities of state and non-state actors from the Global South to engage effectively in multilateral platforms, including supporting in-country partners to support their member states in negotiation processes, and convening conversations linked to the Rio Conventions.

- Supporting regional climate negotiators through providing robust research and policy analysis.

- Working with like-minded organisations and movements to strengthen Global South voices and agency in multilateral platforms.

Whole-of-society approaches

Driving inclusive and participatory approaches that empower and give space to a wide diversity of actors and those most marginalised and affected by climate change impacts to shape and lead just and appropriate climate and biodiversity responses.

- Ensuring local actors can legitimately and meaningfully engage in key political and financial decision-making spaces at different scales.
- Building solidarity and capacity across like-minded movements to build stronger voices and narratives to advocate for their needs.
- Catalysing 'radical' and non-traditional partnerships and collaborations between multiple actors, across sectors and across subnational, national, regional and global scales.



VCA partners after their official UNFCCC side event at COP28, where they discussed challenges and opportunities to democratic decision-making in spaces like COP

SSN in action: Growing Ambition for Locally-Led Adaptation (GA-LLA)

Growing Ambition for Locally-Led Adaptation (GA-LLA) is a five-year (2023-2028) €15 million initiative that supports the implementation of a long-term strategy for locally-led adaptation, spanning Southern, Eastern and Western Africa, as well as South and Southeast Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Pacific.

GA-LLA is funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands (MoFA) and is a partnership between the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and the consortium of LLA partners that developed the strategy, including SSN: Centre for the Indigenous Peoples' Autonomy and Development (CADPI), Caribbean Natural Resource Institute (CANARI), Enda Energie, International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD), IIED, Huairou Commission, Save The Children, Slum Dwellers International (SDI), and the World Resource Institute (WRI).

The initiative

The programme has three objectives:

- Build capabilities within institutions and networks to support LLA delivery.
- Support new and existing partnerships to facilitate LLA, strengthening structured dialogues and learning between groups of actors.
- Enhance accountability, fostering more ownership from local communities and institutions to build evidence of progress towards an LLA transformation.

SSN co-leads activities that support the understanding of effective adaptation financing mechanisms. This entails supporting the development of new adaptation financing mechanisms at the local scale, which embed the principles of LLA into their design and deliver money directly to the local level and/or integrate adaptation financing into existing local-level financing mechanisms.

Expected/realised impacts

SSN aims to actively engage in the programme's ability to radically reframe and re-position the nature of partnerships that address climate change adaptation. Part of this will see the programme developing a 'radical rulebook' to guide the partnership toward business unusual practices, grounded in the LLA principles.



Participants (left) and speaker (right) at the GA-LLA Bridging the Gap: Integrating Local Voices into Adaptation Investments workshop

THE SSN APPROACH:

How we work

SSN drives outcomes and impact through four core approaches to accelerate transformative climate-resilient development. We:

- Advance multi-stakeholder collaboration and processes;
- Facilitate knowledge and innovation brokering;
- Enhance capabilities of institutions and experts in the Global South and work collaboratively with those championing climate resilience; and
- Foster Southern leadership.

Across our work, we aim to nurture inspired and dynamic leadership in the global South: from community grassroots leaders and cities pioneering and driving action, entrepreneurs championing sustainable business solutions and governments positioning their countries as leaders in the transition towards low-emissions, climate-resilient economies and societies.

Core to the SSN approach is recognising that tackling

complex and systemic global challenges requires working together in unprecedented ways to foster “whole of society” approaches. We recognise that action must include actors across society like education, industry, media, science and art. Through advancing multi-stakeholder collaboration and processes, we seek to create spaces across scales for diverse actors - communities, governments, NGOs, businesses - to come together to leverage our combined skills, learning, networks, resources and creativity for effective and equitable climate-resilient development led from the South.

SSN aspires to go beyond traditional partnerships to forge deep, meaningful and inclusive alliances that foster new paradigms and shifts in fundamental structures, processes, and power dynamics that sustain these global challenges. This work amplifies the role of communities and protects the interests of those most marginalised, to exercise their influence and rights to take decisions and implement action.

Knowledge and innovation are needed to unleash the transformative potential of this collaboration.

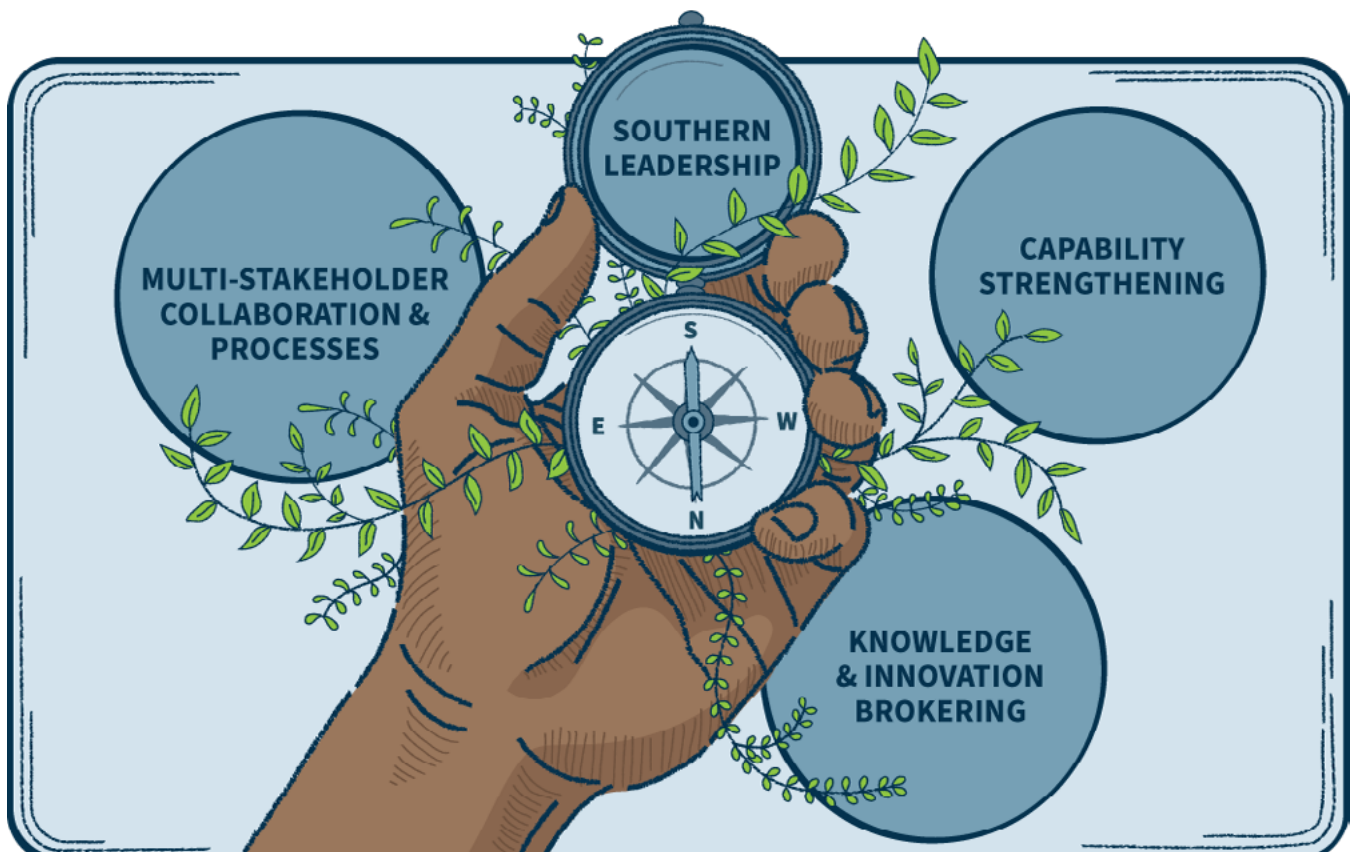


Figure 11: The SSN Approach

It requires rethinking and redesigning the core systems - social, economic, ecological - that shape our world, and catalysing change through new ideas, continual learning and experimentation. SSN facilitates knowledge and innovation brokering, playing the role of an intermediary and supporting other knowledge brokers to facilitate collaboration and drive social learning and innovation. We demonstrate and provide the evidence to scale new innovative practices, technologies and solutions to address systemic challenges.

SSN has shifted from a capacity building to capability strengthening approach over the past 25 years.²⁵ This approach acknowledges that capacity already exists within local partners, and focuses effort on breaking down the barriers that prevent the full potential of these capacities to be brought to bear on the complex development challenges in the Global South. SSN's draws from the capability approach put forward by Amartya Sen emphasising enabling choice, agency and freedoms, together with experiential learning and reflection. It rests on four key points to acknowledge at the outset of a capability strengthening intervention:

- Recognition of the deep and rich expertise to be found in the Global South. Experience shows that when local expertise is applied to a problem, local decision makers are more likely to take forward suggestions as the nuances within the context are better understood.
- Appreciation of the time needed for capability strengthening efforts and the need to focus on capacities at institutional levels to be effective and successful in the long term.
- Emphasis on respectful relationships based on trust, which provides the foundation for more effective collaboration and knowledge sharing.
- Acknowledgment of the structural barriers and power imbalances that exist and limit an individual's capabilities to exercise choice and agency. These need to be identified and actively managed to effectively give experts and institutions in the Global South the autonomy to address these.

What makes SOUTHSOUTHNORTH different?



We have roots in Africa, but are networked globally across international institutions, development partners, civil society organisations and the private sector.



Being positioned in the Global South affords SSN a deep understanding of, and connection to, the climate, development and biodiversity challenges faced here.



We convene the right people to have the difficult conversations needed to make transformative change possible, without a predetermined solution in mind.



Our staff have a range of technical expertise and are united in a common approach to learning and co-creating with local experts, governments and communities.



We are a trusted partner to many Southern-based public institutions having built long-term relationships that support efforts to raise the voice of the Global South in international fora.



We have rigorous contractual, financial and governance systems for managing funds in line with international best practices.

ENDNOTES

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SSN'S THEORY OF CHANGE

