



2016-2017 Highlights

Building partnerships for sustainability

In 2016-2017 START has deepened its collaboration with key organizations in the sustainability space, including the Belmont Forum and Future Earth, and has continued to **actively contribute to global efforts to strengthen knowledge and connect and inspire scientific leadership for advancing solutions to critical sustainability challenges**. START's efficiency and impact have been recognized by the International Center for Climate Governance (ICCG) that named START **3rd Top Climate Think Tank for North America for 2016** under standardized rankings.

START organizes and takes part in high level discussions that shape global action and mobilize resources for sustainability. Recent examples include the participation by START's Executive Director Cheikh Mbow and Board Member Fatima Denton in the high-level event “**Climate Action and Human Wellbeing at a Crossroads**”, organized by The German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE) and aimed at developing key messages to feed into climate negotiations at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP23). Another recent example is the organization, together with the Belmont Forum, of a **panel on building capacity and awareness to address priorities and funding needs for a “pollution-free world” at the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA3)** that will take place in December 2017.

START's new website (www.start.org), launched in 2017 together with a new logo and visual identity, uses clear messaging and impactful design to communicate START's mission, collaborative approach and innovative solutions to a wider variety of audiences.

Connecting and inspiring scientific leadership

The second round of the **Pan-Asia Risk Reduction (PARR) Fellowship program** connected researchers, experts and practitioners from Asia-Pacific, **creating a network of people and institutions capable of developing and implementing innovative approaches to disaster risk reduction**. Nine fellows from four countries took part in the program's



PARR Fellow Justin See (second from left) with the team that will perform field interviews in a flood-prone area in the Philippines.

second round, a 12-month fellowship experience that included a residence period at a host institution in Asia. Six fellows received grants for follow-on research projects. In 2016, as output of the fellowship's first round, START issued three knowledge briefs on disaster risk and vulnerability under global environmental change. In 2017 fellows from the first round also published a chapter as part of a Springer series on disaster risk reduction. Research on earthquake vulnerability in the Philippines by two fellows from the second round has already been published on IOPScience in 2017.

START continues to provide key capacity building support to the **Global Observation of Forest Cover and Land Dynamics (GOFC-GOLD) program**. In September 2017, START brought together GOFC-GOLD Executive Committee leadership to assess the networks' performance and their future direction. The regional networks play a critical role in linking users and producers of Earth observation data, and identifying and addressing data and capacity needs. In September 2017 START also facilitated the launch of a new regional network for the Caucasus region. In 2016-2017 START organized an **advanced training event on Earth observations for 30 fellows from 10 countries in South and South East Asia**, at the Geo-Informatics and Space Technology Development Agency (GISTDA) in Thailand. START also coordinated or co-organized a series of events in Latin America, Africa, Asia and South and Central Europe supporting regional networks workshops and activities, **engaging over 500 scientists**.

The **African Climate Change Fellowship Program (ACCFP)** Policy Advanced Institute (AI) took place 18 to 22 January 2016 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The AI provided **10 ACCFP Policy Fellows from across Africa with a broadened understanding of climate change adaptation** in four key areas: 1) climate change and gender; 2) climate change and water; 3) climate change and green growth; and 4) the economics of climate adaptation. Six facilitators delivered lectures, led group discussions, and helped fellows analyze case studies and problem sets. The final day was devoted to integrating learning across modules, learning how to communicate to decision-makers in different contexts, and fellow presentations.

Strengthening and communicating research for action

As the capacity building lead for the **Adaptation at Scale in Semi-Arid Regions (ASSAR) project**, in 2016-2017 START facilitated the award of **six Small Opportunity Grants** aimed at enabling in-depth research while fostering knowledge and skills of ASSAR team members and promoting cross-regional collaboration. In 2017 START issued **four additional calls for proposals for capacity building activities**, including grants aimed at drawing from findings of ongoing research to directly support local vulnerable groups, and small opportunities grants aimed at supporting ASSAR researchers in implementing creative ideas for increasing the real-world impact of their work.

START also plays a key role as the **ASSAR** project's regional lead for West Africa. In this capacity in 2016 START held Transformative Scenario Planning workshops in Mali and Ghana **to build relevant, challenging, plausible and clear stories around what the future of adaptation may look like through the year 2035**. In 2016-2017 the ASSAR West Africa team issued three papers accepted for publication in peer reviewed journals, and engaged with approximately 30 student researchers, who helped shape outputs, priority areas, and key messages.



Presentation during an ASSAR Research into Use (RiU) workshop in Cape Town.

START led the design and facilitation of a **workshop for fellows from Nepal, Malawi and Kenya** from the **Global Program of Research on Climate Change Vulnerability, Impacts and Adaptation (PROVIA)** after the “Adaptation Futures” conference in Rotterdam, in May 2016. The fellows had recently completed a one-month stay at their respective host institutions and the workshop provided a well-timed opportunity for the fellows to meet each other and refine their fellowship research proposals before embarking on implementation.

Promoting transdisciplinary approaches at local, regional, and global scale

START is a partner in the **Future Resilience for African Cities and Lands (FRACTAL) project** that advances scientific knowledge about regional climate change and promotes the integration of this knowledge into decision-making at the city-regional scale. In 2016-2017 a series of city learning labs were organized to **engage city governments, sectoral resources managers, climate modelers and researchers to identify and address issues related to climate change in the cities of Lusaka, Windhoek and Maputo**. START manages a small opportunities grant fund that promotes exchange and capacity building across the cities. In addition, START has played a pivotal role in FRACTAL by contributing the Global Environmental Change (GEC) in Research in Africa Grants. Three GEC grant awards were made to FRACTAL research teams at the University of Namibia, University of Zambia, and Chinhoyi University of Technology. These grants allowed the research teams to more deeply explore burning issues in the cities related to water supply, sanitation, energy, and livelihoods. The grants also served as a launching point for cross-city comparison, knowledge exchange, and learning in FRACTAL.

START actively participates in global efforts to strengthen the development, use, and evaluation of **Transdisciplinary (TD) research** approaches in the sustainability arena. In 2016-2017 START and partners organized two workshops at Stellenbosch University in South Africa aimed at transmitting the principles of TD research to a broad audience, including researchers, funders, civil servants and NGOs. Together with partners, START also organized two three-day workshops in the United States to **advance understanding of TD research in the context of urbanization and the food-energy-water nexus, and increasing aptitude for developing proposals with strong TD elements**. In November-December 2017, START will convene individuals from across Africa to share perspectives, experiences, and to identify opportunities to formally create an **African Transdisciplinary Research Network**. A major outcome of the event will be an articulation of priority areas and actions for developing an African Network dedicated to strengthening and mobilizing regional capacities for addressing complex global change challenges facing the African continent today.



As part of the FRACTAL project a team from Chinhoyi University of Technology, Zimbabwe, visited Windhoek, Namibia, to exchange knowledge about water and energy management in the context of urbanization and climate change.