



Sixth Strategic Plan (2026–2030)

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Message from the Chair of the Small Working Group and the Secretariat Director

It is our pleasure to present the Sixth Strategic Plan (2026–2030) of the Asia-Pacific Network for Global Change Research (APN). As APN marks its 30th Anniversary, we extend our sincere appreciation to our national Focal Points (nFPs), Steering Committee members, Scientific Planning Group (SPG) members, invited experts, early career professionals, partners and many others who have contributed to APN's growth as a regional platform connecting science, policy and practice.

Over the past three decades, APN has supported regional research collaboration, scientific capacity development and science–policy engagement across the Asia-Pacific region. The Sixth Strategic Plan builds on these achievements while responding to a rapidly changing global context.

The development of the Sixth Strategic Plan was a collaborative effort. We thank the members of the Steering Committee Small Working Group for leading its development, as well as our nFPs, SPG members and invited experts for their valuable contributions through the consultation process. Their input helped ensure that the Plan reflects the diversity of the Asia-Pacific region and our shared commitment to advancing sustainability through knowledge, innovation and partnership.

We also wish to express our appreciation to the members of the Task Force on Institutional and Financial Sustainability, whose work in developing the Fundraising Plan has provided an essential foundation for strengthening APN's long-term sustainability.

Building on APN's achievements, the Sixth Strategic Plan positions the Network to strengthen its role as a regional science–policy bridge. It emphasises actionable and transdisciplinary research, strengthened scientific capacity development, deeper engagement with policymakers and broader collaboration with civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders, long-term flagship initiatives, empowering early career professionals and strengthened institutional sustainability. The Plan also recognises the growing importance of digital innovation, Earth observation and emerging technologies in supporting science-based solutions to global change challenges.

At the same time, ensuring APN's long-term effectiveness will require both strong scientific leadership and a more diversified, sustainable funding base. The accompanying Fundraising Plan therefore represents an important component of APN's future development. Together, these measures will reinforce APN's foundation for sustaining regional research and scientific capacity development.

As we implement the Sixth Strategic Plan, we look forward to working closely with APN members and partners to translate the Network's vision into meaningful action. Together, we can continue to support a more sustainable, resilient and inclusive Asia-Pacific region for present and future generations.

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Chair, Small Working Group for the development of the Sixth Strategic Plan

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Rationale

The Asia-Pacific region is the setting for the development aspirations of more than half of the world's population. Attempts to achieve these aspirations have placed a significant burden on the sustainability of the region's natural resources, vulnerable communities and cultural heritage. This is further exacerbated by ongoing natural and anthropogenic changes in the Earth's biogeophysical system.

Evidence-based research and scientific endeavours have provided new insights into these changes and their associated impacts; however, scientists, policymakers, practitioners, the private sector and the general public acknowledge that further challenges lie ahead. The Asia-Pacific Network for Global Change Research (APN) is a highly functional networking organisation that is exceptionally well placed to contribute to the generation of new knowledge to address these evolving global challenges by supporting collaborative research and scientific capacity development, particularly those aimed at training the next generation of early career professionals.

For 30 years, APN has contributed to and helped shape the global change agenda by identifying and addressing diverse and complex challenges. Through its programmes and alignment with regional and global scale agendas such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the Paris Agreement of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, as well as its ongoing support and delivery of support services, APN will continue to contribute towards a more sustainable future in the Asia-Pacific region, by bridging international boundaries and facilitating dialogue between scientists, policymakers and other societal stakeholders.

The global community continues to face interconnected challenges that are reshaping socioeconomic systems and environmental livability. While recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic remains uneven, climate change and increasing extreme events, biodiversity loss and pollution continue to intensify pressures on natural and human systems. Consequently, there is a continued urgency to address these challenges in an integrated manner, recognising the interlinkages between climate, ecosystems and society. Advancing sustainable development requires accelerating transitions towards decarbonisation, resilience and nature-positive pathways supported by improved and sustainable science-policy engagement. APN also recognises the role the private sector can play in achieving a more sustainable outcome for future generations. For this reason, APN encourages business innovation and participation at all levels.

Accordingly, APN will enhance its support of research and scientific capacity development activities on global change and sustainability by promoting scientific findings that can contribute to the realisation of more sustainable and resilient societies.

The APN's Sixth Strategic Plan (2026–2030) positions the organisation to play a distinctive role as a regional science-policy bridge, leveraging its long-standing network, convening power and experience in transdisciplinary research. Through this Strategic Plan, APN will prioritise actionable science, strengthen partnerships and accelerate the translation of knowledge into policy and practice to support sustainable and resilient societies across the Asia-Pacific region.

Vision

A dynamic and responsive Asia-Pacific that effectively addresses global change challenges and advances sustainability through innovative, inclusive and transdisciplinary research, scientific capacity development, informed policy action and enhanced engagement of civil society organisations and the private sector.

Mission

APN's mission is to support a cohesive and interactive Asia-Pacific community of global change researchers, policymakers, entrepreneurs, practitioners, early career professionals and civil society. This community is strengthened through APN's extensive and diverse network of science, policy and practice experts, which enables innovative, inclusive and transdisciplinary approaches to collaboration, capacity development and policy engagement.

An integral part of its mission is to support and promote scientific investigations into changes in the Earth's life-support systems and their implications for sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region. APN contributes to the realisation of these investigations through:

- Supporting scientific research and evidence-based response strategies.
- Effectively utilising scientific outcomes to inform policy decision-making processes applicable to all levels of governance and societal sectors in each country.
- Scientific capacity development within and beyond governments, including affected communities and other members of civil society.

Global change affects all countries, and its impacts and the ability to measure and understand these impacts intersect different disciplines. Therefore, APN and its network of professionals can effectively address global change and sustainability issues in a holistic manner across a broad spectrum of challenges in the following thematic areas:

1. Climate;
2. Biodiversity and ecosystems;
3. Air, land, coasts and oceans;
4. Food, water and energy; and
5. Risk, adaptation and resilience.

Furthermore, the ability to connect governments, the private sector, civil society, and diverse knowledge systems and knowledge holders has become increasingly more urgent due to the acceleration in innovation, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and applied science, to address the impacts of global change. Much of this innovation is now driven by the private sector; therefore, the role of the private sector in the Asia-Pacific region will be explored for the delivery and responsible management of these innovative research outcomes and services to those in need.

Values

APN, being a network of emancipated member countries that strives to overcome the challenges of global change and achieve sustainability, will adopt the following values as guiding principles for its work and activities:

Value 1: Respect for the cultural, traditional and political identity of member countries.

Value 2: Open and respectful dialogue and diplomacy in the conduct of APN activities.

Value 3: Scientific integrity and adherence to professional values and practices when conducting and applying the results of science.

Value 4: Collaboration and equal and full participation of member countries in the management of APN and its activities.

Value 5: Ethical and transparent management practices in the administration of APN resources.

Goals

EVALUATION

Goal 1: Regional Research

Focus

APN will continue to support high-quality, regionally relevant research that addresses priority global change challenges across the Asia-Pacific, particularly for developing countries and to encourage research that is designed to strengthen transdisciplinary approaches, including codesign of research with policymakers and stakeholders.

Key objective

To generate actionable and policy-relevant scientific knowledge through codesigned research aligned with regional priorities and global agendas.

Key areas

APN will:

1. Promote the codesign of research through an active dialogue process with policymakers and stakeholders to ensure that research is relevant, demand-driven and responsive to real-world needs. This approach will strengthen ownership of research outcomes and enhance their applicability in policy and practice.
2. Ensure that research activities are aligned with national policies and regional priorities to enhance coherence and relevance. By doing so, APN-supported research will better contribute to national development agendas and support evidence-based decision making processes.
3. Support the development of policy-relevant outputs, including policy briefs and country-specific case studies, to facilitate the translation of scientific knowledge into actionable goals. These outputs will be tailored to the needs of policymakers and other stakeholders to maximise impact.
4. Transition from short-term, fragmented funding mechanisms towards longer-term flagship initiatives that engage a broad range of stakeholders, including philanthropic organisations. This shift will enable more sustained collaboration, greater impact and stronger integration with institutional and financial sustainability objectives under Goal 5.

Priority topics of interest

APN members identified a diverse set of priority topics that are expected to shape the global change research agenda over the coming strategic phase. The topics presented reflect the increasing complexity of global change challenges and the need for integrated and transdisciplinary approaches.

- Climate resilience, adaptation and climate-related losses & damages¹
- Nature-based solutions and ecosystem restoration
- Urban systems, sustainability and resilience
- Digital technologies and AI for Earth observations
- Climate–environment–health nexus (one health)
- Chemicals, waste, pollution and the circular economy²

¹ APN uses the term “losses and damages” rather than “Loss and Damage” to maintain a neutral, scientific framing. “Loss and Damage” is policy-specific and rooted in UNFCCC negotiation processes, whereas “losses and damages” is a broader scientific term used to describe climate impacts outside formal negotiation contexts.

² The inclusion of chemicals, waste and pollution reflects the establishment of the new UN Intergovernmental Science–Policy Panel, which elevates these issues to a global change priority alongside climate change and biodiversity.

- Climate finance, carbon markets and green transitions
- Food, water, energy and human security under climate change
- Marine and coastal systems
- Governance, diverse knowledge systems and implementation gaps
- Social equity, vulnerability and community resilience under global change
- Emerging technologies and innovation pathways relevant to global change mitigation, adaptation and sustainable development.

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Goal 2: Scientific Capacity Development

Focus

APN will strengthen individual, institutional and regional capacities for developing countries to support global change research and its application. Scientific capacity development will support engagement with policymakers, research institutions, as well as active participation in codesign and science–policy processes.

Key objective

To strengthen scientific capacities for research personnel, science–policy engagement and early career professional development.

Key areas

APN will:

1. With the involvement and assistance of developed countries, strengthen individual and professional skills through targeted scientific capacity development that enhances research, leadership and science–policy engagement for developing countries.
2. Enhance institutional and collaborative scientific capacity by fostering networks and partnerships that sustain and integrate regional research efforts.
3. Strengthen science–policy engagement capacity by equipping researchers with the skills and knowledge to effectively interact with policymakers and support codesign processes, while also including policymakers in capacity development activities to enhance collaboration and ensure research is relevant and actionable.
4. Develop science communication capacity by promoting the translation of research into accessible formats such as policy briefs for policymakers, practitioners and wider audiences.
5. Support evidence-based policymaking by strengthening capacities in policy analysis and the integration of scientific evidence into decision making.

Scientific Capacity Development Programme (CAPaBLE)

APN will:

1. Explore the Scientific Capacity Development call for proposals and integrating it with the Collaborative Regional Research Programme to enhance coherence and impact, while retaining dedicated capacity development components.
2. Explore initiatives to strengthen the CAPaBLE Programme, ensuring it remains an effective and dedicated instrument for scientific capacity development.

Early Career Professionals (ECPs)

APN will:

1. Provide platforms for ECPs, including Proposal Development Training Workshops, annual forums and other engagement opportunities, to support networking, scientific capacity development and research leadership.

2. Strengthen the follow-up and tracking of ECPs, particularly through the Asia-Pacific Network of Early Career Professionals for Global Change Research (APN-ECAP)³, to better understand their career development and long-term impact (crosscuts with Goal 5).
3. Establish an APN Alumni to ensure ECPs will continue to engage with the APN Secretariat and its members. An Alumni will help provide ongoing mentoring to early career professionals and policymakers, as well as help to create a succession pathway for future APN members.

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³ Under Goal 5, APN will institutionalise APN-ECAP as a new organ under the APN framework.

Goal 3: Science–Policy Interactions

Focus

APN will strengthen engagement between scientists and policymakers and provide policy-relevant research to support decision-making.

Key objective

To improve the policy relevance, uptake and impact of APN-supported research.

Key areas

APN will:

1. Undertake ongoing engagement and assessment with policymakers throughout the project lifecycle to ensure research remains relevant and responsive to policy needs (crosscuts with Goals 1 and 2).
2. Support codesign, coimplementation and coevaluation of projects to strengthen collaboration between researchers and policymakers (Crosscuts with Goals 1 and 2).
3. Encourage ownership of research outcomes that lead to better policy-making decisions (crosscuts with Goals 1 and 2).
4. Facilitate the development of policy briefs and case studies to translate scientific findings into actionable insights for decision makers (crosscuts with Goal 1).
5. Strengthen capacity development for government officials to better interpret and apply scientific evidence in policymaking (crosscuts with Goal 2).
6. Enhance science–policy communication through structured science–policy dialogues to foster exchange and mutual understanding.
7. Develop approaches for science–policy impact evaluation to better assess the impacts of research outcomes on policy decisions and practice.

Goal 4: Stakeholder Engagement

Focus

APN will strengthen engagement with stakeholders across different sectors and societal groups to support research implementation and impact.

Key objective

To enhance collaboration and engagement with key stakeholders to support research and its application.

Key areas

APN will:

1. Undertake stakeholder mapping to create an expert database to identify and prioritise relevant stakeholders who have the potential to support collaboration across sectors, levels and thematic areas.
2. Strengthen engagement with national line Ministries and Government Departments to enhance policy alignment and the uptake of research.
3. Enhance engagement with regional research organisations to support coordination and collaboration at the regional level.
4. Engage with global change research networks to strengthen international collaboration and knowledge exchange.
5. Increase engagement with civil society to incorporate diverse perspectives and support inclusive approaches to gauge public policy.
6. Strengthen engagement with the private sector by exploring opportunities for collaboration and innovation, developing and promoting cofunding mechanisms to support shared investment and facilitating knowledge exchange forums to enhance dialogue and dissemination of research findings (crosscuts with Goal 5).
7. Engage with philanthropic organisations to diversify funding sources and support strategic initiatives (crosscuts with Goal 5).

Goal 5: Institutional and Financial Sustainability

Focus

APN will strengthen its institutional organs, governance and financial sustainability to support long-term operations, effectiveness and impact.

Key objective

To ensure institutional effectiveness, sustainability, impact and improved coordination across APN organs.

Key areas

Institutional organs and governance

APN will:

1. Reintroduce staggered terms for national Focal Points in the Steering Committee to strengthen continuity and institutional memory.
2. Develop a Governance Handbook as a practical guide for members on roles, responsibilities and procedures.
3. Further strengthen subregional committees to enhance their effectiveness, including establishing clear reporting obligations, supporting the development of flagship initiatives, recognising variations in subregional performance and engagement, and exploring the potential establishment of subregional hubs to enhance visibility and regional presence.
4. Further strengthen Secretariat functions to support organisational effectiveness, including resource mobilisation, digital systems, science-policy engagement, and monitoring and evaluation.
5. Strengthen digital infrastructure, AI-enabled knowledge management and data-sharing systems.
6. Institutionalise APN-ECAP as a new organ under the APN framework, ensuring alignment with organisational priorities and resources.
7. Explore the feasibility of subregional nodes in strategic locations.

Financial sustainability

APN will:

1. Implement the Fundraising Plan⁴ to strengthen financial sustainability and support organisational objectives.
2. Encourage contributions from member countries to enhance ownership and diversify funding sources.
3. Strengthen engagement with the private sector to explore opportunities for collaboration, cofunding and innovation (crosscuts with Goal 4).

⁴ The Fundraising Plan is included as Annex 1.

4. Transition from short-term, fragmented funding mechanisms towards longer-term flagship initiatives to enhance impact and sustainability.

Monitoring and impact

APN will:

1. Strengthen monitoring and impact assessment of regional research and capacity development to ensure alignment with strategic objectives and long-term outcomes.
2. Enhance tracking of early career professional development, including monitoring alumni of APN-ECAP, to assess career progression and impact (crosscuts with Goal 2).
3. Improve the monitoring of policy uptake to better understand and demonstrate the impact of research on policy and practice.
4. Strengthen monitoring of stakeholder engagement to assess the breadth and effectiveness of collaboration across sectors and levels.
5. Enhance tracking of cofunding mobilisation and leverage to better capture financial contributions and shared investment.
6. Continue monitoring and strengthening knowledge management and communication, dissemination and outreach to further improve the visibility, accessibility and impact of APN activities and outputs.
7. Strengthen project lead alumni in promoting APN activities and achieving APN's strategic goals.