One community committed to making a difference in people's lives by shaping a climate-resilient future together
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BACKGROUND

The Walker Institute, based at the University of Reading (UoR), is an interdisciplinary research institute (IDRI) founded in 2005 with a focus on climate systems research. It was re-established in 2015 with the goal of generating new interdisciplinary knowledge to support the development of resilient and sustainable livelihoods in Africa and South Asia. It draws together UoR’s extraordinary expertise in Agriculture, Hydro-Climate System Science, Livelihoods and Nutrition with Economics, Law, Data and Informatics to address the fundamental questions currently facing disaster resilience and development and encompassing social, economic, technological and political strategies which are being implemented at all scales of society.

With world-leading capabilities in understanding climate systems, improving the prediction of future climate and in estimating impacts and consequences, we are committed to advancing our knowledge to address real-world problems and develop systemic institutional impact. Our bottom-up, problem-focused approach means that our operational research is conducted in trusted partnership with national and regional government, research institutes and humanitarian partners. We use a combination of single, multi- and inter-disciplinary approaches grounded in fundamental climate system research and the social sciences to develop systems-based solutions to challenging climate-related issues. A cornerstone of Walker’s work is evidence synthesis generated through field work, stakeholder engagement and research. This comprehensive, integrated approach provides a robust mechanism for translating research into evidence to inform decision-making.

We now encompass an international network of over 300 researchers, policy-makers, practitioners and users who contribute as one Community with shared values and concern to turn emergent knowledge into evidence-based tools that empower choice and so make a genuine difference to the lives of some of the poorest communities now, and help safeguard the lives of future generations.

Our international Community members collaborate together on the translation and application of interdisciplinary research (IDR) with three main principles:

- Using research to help make a difference - taking a systems-based approach to understanding the multiple hazards facing people's lives and livelihoods;
- Learning by doing to increase the number of professionals (researchers, policy-makers, practitioners) who can support a systems-based approach to climate resilient development – through action research and innovative teaching and capacity building (Walker Academy);
- Understanding people’s choices, options and opportunities, and developing the evidence base to support appropriate policy action (local, national, regional) - measuring the impact of this on household income/food access/welfare.

There remains considerable scope for increasing international, mutually beneficial collaborative activities across UoR and between academic and research institutions, government and humanitarian agencies, and the private sector in Africa and South Asia. With its exceptional skill set spanning climate science, tropical agriculture, livelihoods and international development, UoR is uniquely positioned to provide a comprehensive and integrated approach to fundamental problems of development. It is increasingly recognised that sustainable, resilient development cannot take place without this integrated, systems based knowledge. The linked Walker Academy plays an essential role in supporting this approach providing a vital new vehicle to enhance cross-disciplinary collaborations. The Academy’s approach is to develop customized capacity building that supports ‘climate to policy and impact’ literacy, with systems-based thinking underpinning understanding of the complex interconnections across climate and livelihoods systems.

ABOUT THE WALKER INSTITUTE

Our Vision

Our vision is for a sustainable and resilient global society, which is able to fully address the interrelated challenges presented by environmental and socio-economic change and climate variability, and thrive by turning such challenges into opportunities for growth.

Our Mission

To be a world class institute for interdisciplinary research, innovation and capacity building with an effective international network of research, government and knowledge exchange partners working as one community to advance knowledge that makes a meaningful difference to people’s livelihoods and wellbeing in some of the world’s poorest communities. Together, we
will use a combination of single, multi-, and inter-disciplinary approaches grounded in fundamental climate systems research and the social sciences to drive demand-led, systems-based solutions to climate-related challenges. A cornerstone of our collaborative work will be evidence synthesis, generated through field work, stakeholder partnerships, research and capacity building. Experience has shown that approach provides the framework needed to translate research into actionable evidence for decision-making at local, national and international levels.

**Our Experience and Capabilities**

The Walker Institute has leading capabilities in understanding climate systems, improving the prediction of future climate and in estimating impacts and consequences. It has a wide community of over 200 researchers and a strong, expanding network of international partners in Africa, Asia and the Americas.

We have experience of managing successful large-scale research programmes and extensive high-level experience working with donors, UN agencies and governments, including the Africa Union, UN (WHO/WMO, UNEP, UNDP, UNCCST, WFP), World Bank, UK Government APPGs and DfID. The project team has expertise in co-development of assessment tools and scaling-up for implementation through practice-focused partners (e.g. RAINWATCH), and development of monitoring resources (e.g. HEA/IHM training for USAID FEWSNET, Adaptive Social Protection in West Africa for DFID/World Bank) and “barriers to uptake” of information that are likely to be encountered in translating evidence into advice and political action.

**Our Strategic Priorities**

Through bringing together the extraordinary cluster of expertise from across our international Community, we will:

- **Cultivate mutually beneficial and strategic collaborations** through an effective networking structure and by building long-term partnerships of the highest quality at local, national, regional and international levels. This will accelerate the translation of our research into action, advance understanding of inter-related global issues and promote innovation, influence and practice.

- **Work in equitable partnerships to push** the boundaries of multi- and inter-disciplinary research to understand how the challenges of disaster resilience, good governance, technology, water, food, agriculture, health and social well-being interrelate and inter-act in the face of climate change. Contribute to a new knowledge base and improved understanding surrounding climate-resilience and sustainable development;

- **Develop and undertake rapid and impactful translation of our research through innovative knowledge exchange practices that apply the new knowledge and synthesise the evidence generated to inform decision-making at all levels**. Our objective is to deliver significant societal impacts at local, national, regional and global levels which make a real difference to people’s lives;

- **Engage proactively with decision-makers** and help to embed an “Enabling Frame for Action” (EFFA) that ensures a consistent pull through of our latest research and supports its effective use in core national, international government and donor programmes. This engagement is designed to support the production, exchange and analysis of information from across multiple sectors and levels of governance, to trigger coherent action and investment strategies;

- **Grow the Walker Academy to develop our interdisciplinary community** with forward-thinking academics, policy makers and practitioners that have the skills, opportunity and desire to engage people from across disciplines and institutions in their work, and to help build intellectual leadership through proactive and sustained capacity development;

- **Foster sub-national, national and regional collaboration and cooperation** across Africa, Asia and the Americas for sharing knowledge systems at a global level, and developing the skills, knowledge, technology and regulatory structures that support sustainable and resilient livelihoods for all.

**Our Values**

Our intention continues to be to develop a distinctive, ‘disruptive’ approach to interdisciplinary research which fosters excellence, breaks down barriers between disciplines, works across sectors, and integrates knowledge gained from studies at local, national, regional, and international levels. Our overarching aim is to create an enabling and sustainable environment that facilitates the change needed in our rapidly changing world. This approach evolves through fully integrating ourselves for the long term within regions and countries and ensuring our IDR is driven by local, national and regional priorities first and foremost.
We seek to understand and work with relevant policy and practitioner networks which operate within identified areas of interest. Where these communities do not exist, we will seek to foster their development, and involve a comprehensive range of individuals and organisations that have an active interest in the area. This will enable us to be part of emerging global dialogues early enough in the process to promote better informed policy and practice; to influence the shifting funding landscape towards an issue-based rather than siloed approach, which will help communities thrive in the face of climate variability and environmental and socio-economic change; and to contribute proactively to building intellectual leadership.

Our Functions

We value permeability and flexibility between disciplines at all times, and across all functions such that collaboration is instinctive, integral and not competitive. We have identified and work within an Enabling Frame For Action (EFFA). Our key functions reflect this and are:

- **Inter-Disciplinary Research** on key cross-sectoral topics relating to disaster resilience, including governance and law - to generate the rigorous science-based evidence needed for effective decision-making and putting in place coherent investment strategies to deal with increasing climate-related challenges. This IDR will generate new knowledge that will inform other functions of the Institute and facilitate further partnerships and collaborations across the Community;

- **Data and Technological Development** – in response to a demand from users and producers of information for new analytics and open source technology to interpret data, aligned with their own planning horizons;

- **Education, Training and Capacity Building via the Walker Academy** – support the development of the new skills and capacity needed to tackle complex inter-related challenges in climate and development, including the interpretation of multisectoral data and the synthesis of information from across different disciplines, required for effective decision-making and climate services. This includes the “Perspectives” seminar programme, student masterclasses, exchanges, internships and placements, upgrading of new curricula (modules to degrees), joint development and delivery of new courses across the Community (field, face-to-face, e-learning), student-staff immersive exchanges, and short CPD courses for different audiences (academics through to practitioners and policy makers);

- **Knowledge Innovation and Management (KIM)** – embed a vibrant community of practice to share learning and harness innovative and immersive methodologies for rapid and impactful translation of our research, ensuring that communication with each and every audience is appropriate, citable and can inform decision-making effectively at all levels. A suite of knowledge products will be available on our website and/or as Open Access and/or available via Creative Commons Licensing as appropriate. These include Peer-reviewed Publications, Government Briefing Papers, Policy Briefs, Reports, Factsheets, Digital media, Serious Games, Storytelling and Visual Arts/Theatre. Our website includes a community area, where individuals can sign up as members of the community. Here they are encouraged to communicate and collaborate with other like-minded individuals, to share information and ideas. Training Laboratories, Technical Consultations, Scenario Planning will be interspersed with more traditional seminars, workshops and conference events.

- **Resource Mobilisation** –this includes funding from a combination of traditional/non-traditional sources as well as modest support from central funds to establish the business functions necessary for a Centre of Excellence on Walker’s size and scale and to implement the other functions, including applied research and training. Adequate funding will also ensure we are able to provide appropriate mechanisms for internal resource allocation, and support services which are structured and delivered optimally to support our core academic activities.

ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE

Structure

The Walker Institute is made up of a set of formal and informal management structures to maximise opportunities for all staff to engage with its day-to-day running and help us sustain the balance between curiosity-driven research, and work targeted on funding applications and national/international priorities as part of the EFFA.

Our structure comprises the core **Operational Team** (Administration, Finance, Partnerships and Knowledge Innovations and Management (KIM)), **Leadership Team, Research Clusters, Walker Ambassadors** and **Cross-Division Advisory Platform** (CDAP) and the **Walker Associates/Community Members**. Our internal review process is owned and managed by the Walker Director, in communication with the external **Non-Executive Board (NEB)** and the **Deans’ Steering Group (DSG)**. The DSG is an internal strategic Steering Group to support the Walker Institute, with membership from the relevant Research Themes (P&R, Environment, Food & Health). The DSG meets termly and oversees overall progress and Walker’s fit to University Strategy measured against the objectives, will identify problems, and will advise the external Non-Executive Board on any necessary changes to the Strategic Priorities and Research Programme.
Walker Institute Charter

Effective since: 1st January 2019

Walker Membership

The Walker Institute has two levels of membership: Walker Ambassadors and Walker Community Members.

Walker Ambassadors and the Cross-Division Advisory Platform

We have been working to foster relationships with key individuals in different academic areas over the last year and through the growing Alumni network from the Walker Academy. The Walker Ambassadors are Community Members that form a Cross-Division Advisory Platform to challenge, advise and support both internal and external knowledge sharing and profile raising. The Ambassadors are pro-active researchers across the University of Reading, who are committed to making a difference with their research, value genuine and long-term stakeholder partnerships, and are literate in ‘science to policy and impact’ with relevant expertise for the Walker Institute.

The role of the Ambassadors is three-fold:

1. To challenge the work of the Walker Institute and the Academy;
2. To share information internally about the Walker Institute and feedback to the Leadership Team, and if required relevant programmes, from within their respective Schools, Research Divisions and areas of expertise;
3. To act as ambassadors externally for the Walker Institute.

Walker Community Members:

The Walker Institute represents a consensual alliance of interdisciplinary researchers and organizations with a common vision and strong set of values, ensuring that every aspect of our collaborative work is a means to an end, mutually beneficial and neither exploitative nor extractive to any beneficiary.

In keeping with our inclusive values, we actively encourage individuals and groups to participate fully in the Walker Institute and its activities by becoming ‘Community Members’. Community members represent the different Schools and Research Divisions across the university as well as a strong, expanding network of international partners (Higher Education Institutes, Research, Knowledge-based, Government and/or Non-Governmental Organizations) in Africa, Asia and the Americas. All members bring their own strengths, relationships and aspirations to Walker. We embrace these, and where possible we will build on these existing strengths to enhance Walker’s activities. The Walker website has a dedicated and interactive ‘community area’, where individuals can sign up as members of the community. Here they are encouraged to communicate and collaborate with other like-minded individuals, to share information and ideas.

From 2019, all Community Members will be required to sign the Walker Community Charter online, to endorse their commitment to working with us and actively embracing the culture and the principles behind our unique way of working in order for the Institute to function as it is intended. The Charter itself has been created in consultation with members, and will be reviewed periodically to keep it relevant. Individual members’ adherence to the Charter will be reviewed in a positive way to help encourage and foster active participation in the community and more innovative working around the founding principles of the Institute. The impact of the Charter, as reflected in members’ own experience of participation in the Community, will be regularly reviewed with a view to improving collaboration and cooperation across our membership.

Membership Rights and Responsibilities

Community Membership is voluntary and entails rights and responsibilities for the Member outlined in Box 1 below. Membership is for 4 years and is renewable. All members may participate in and lead the development of Walker Institute activities, and all members have the right to participate in Walker activities.

Eligibility Criteria

While reviewing membership requests, the Leadership Team is guided by the following criteria:

- Demonstrated commitment to the Walker Institute’s objectives and values, and ability to contribute to the development of the Walker Institute, its Community and IDR programmes.
- Willingness to provide in-kind support, services or resources that can aid the operation and development of the Walker Institute.
- Links to major African and Asian constituencies.
Box 1: Rights and Responsibilities of Community Members

We encourage Walker Community Members to:

- Push research boundaries and drive interdisciplinary research to have a positive impact on people’s lives - taking a systems-based understanding of a multi-hazard on lives and livelihoods;
- Learn by doing and build our collective capacity for systemic impact – and so increase the number of professionals (researchers, policy-makers, practitioners) who can support a systems-based approach to the emergent challenges for a sustainable and resilient future.
- Understand people and empower choice by developing the evidence base necessary to support appropriate policy action at all levels (local, national, regional).
- Be part of the conversation: help to engage, to shape, to influence and to make a meaningful difference in the lives of people living in Low Income Countries.

By signing up as a member of the Walker Community you agree to:

- Share the vision of the Walker Institute and have an abiding interest in the Walker Institute, adhering to our collective values.
- Be an active Community Member, linked to the Walker Institute at the University of Reading
- Remain informed of the main developments, results and outputs of the Walker Institute and its Community.
- Examine and challenge the work of the Walker Institute and its programmes of work.
- Provide advice on research activities in their respective areas of expertise.

In return we will:

- Help you to pull your work through to make a difference rooted in real and articulated need – you will have the opportunity to contribute to a bigger global picture via work tackling the challenging and significant problems associated with sustainable and resilient development - intellectually stimulating work with interesting people.
- Enable you to engage in more ‘risk-taking’, innovative and novel research on topics crossing traditional disciplines and adopting systems-based approaches to tackling emerging challenges surrounding sustainable and resilient development.
- Dedicate resources (Partnerships and KIM) to help with the framing and development of innovative Knowledge Products (from formal publications, targeted briefings and workshops through to training laboratories and visual arts approaches) to build your capacity for impact and ensure pull through to policy interventions and appropriate societal action.
- Support your growth and individual/group reputation through cutting edge capacity building activities, interaction with the Community Website and access to funders and partners that come to ‘all of us’ because of our international recognition and our reputation for enabling sustainable and systemic impact.
- Provide resources where/when appropriate to enable Community Members to participate in external high level events to introduce the Walker Institute, facilitate interventions, communicate the broad aims of the Walker Academy and share the aims and results of individual projects as appropriate.

These criteria constitute a checklist only. No member is expected to meet them all. These criteria apply to full Community Members as well as Walker Ambassadors.
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Knowledge exchange practice is about sharing ideas and expertise, and is a vital part of our work. As such, it is woven through our Strategic Priorities and underpins our objectives. Our principles for communication are respectful, inclusive and accessible engagement, and we embed this in everything that we do.

In terms of profile building internally, we have established the Walker Ambassadors and the linked Cross-Division Advisory Platform and we will use this to continue to increase our reach across research divisions and themes and a number of focused activities e.g. “Perspectives Seminars” and Research Clusters. These activities are designed to fill IDR knowledge gaps identified by our work on the ground and in partnership with national and regional government agencies.

Externally, we already have an active community that we engage in. Much of this is via the work and connections of the core leadership and research teams. Identification of key events and activities in which to participate, as well as ensuring that stakeholder analysis is a part of all large research projects, will increase the reach and applicability of what we do. The Walker Ambassadors will ensure that together with the core research team, we can continue to be active participants and session leads at relevant high-profile events.

The completed re-development of Walker’s website, ensures that the content and structure is in line with our the 2019-2022 vision, and this work has included the design of the community section to make sure the website is in keeping with our style of engagement. The community section is a coffee shop-style experience, enabling dialogue on different issues and projects.

Our 2019-2022 Communications and Engagement Strategy will shortly be available via the KIM team.

Annual Event

To promote the exchange of knowledge, raise Walker’s profile and spur collaboration across the international Walker Community, one high profile annual event (e.g. 2018 COP24 Dinner) will be held in one of our partner countries with the primary purposes to:

- Provide updates and review of existing programmes and projects.
- Open and facilitate dialogue identifying key areas and priorities for future focused research and capacity building activities.
- Consider changes that may need to Walker’s “Living Strategy”.

GOVERNANCE

Walker Leadership Team (WLT)

The Director of the Walker Institute heads the Leadership Team, and is responsible for its strategic vision and final decisions over human, financial, environmental and technical operations. Day-to-day operations are performed by the Walker Executive Administrator and Assistant Administrator.

The Leadership Team (LT) is Chaired by the Director and includes the Heads of Partnerships, Business Development and Knowledge Innovation and Management, Strategic Research Leads and the Walker Academy Coordinator. The WLT is responsible for the strategic direction, administrative and financial operations, knowledge management, publicity and organizational tasks.

Specific tasks include:

- Establish task forces or focused project teams to mobilise resources and accomplish specific activities in the Walker Implementation Plan.
- Coordinate the work and review feedback from the advisory committees, task forces and research interest groups, including ongoing evaluation and prioritization of strategic objectives, initiatives, projects, capacity building and knowledge innovation and management activities.
- Identify and evaluate new areas for collaboration and opportunities for resource mobilization.
- Review priorities, operations, finance and other ad hoc items as needed.
- Provide facilitative oversight to KIM task forces for specific, high profile, focussed annual events, including meeting type, location, participants, timing, agenda, and documentation.
- Prepare documentation and develop processes and programmes for review and approval by the NEB and Walker advisory groups.
Monitor and evaluate the progress of Walker operations, strategic priorities, approved initiatives, projects, capacity building activities (e.g. Walker Academy) and knowledge innovation and management activities.

Facilitate communication at all levels, between advisory groups, task forces and research clusters as well as with organizations supporting the work of the Walker Institute internationally.

**Walker Non-Executive Board (NEB)**

The NEB provides non-binding strategic advice for all the activities that we undertake and recommends the strategic plan and major initiatives for the Institute. It is responsible for ensuring that Walker abides by its aims, delivers its mission effectively by overseeing our overall policies and objectives, and will guide quality improvement, assess program effectiveness, and ensure our work is monitored and evaluated effectively. Our Board members are experts from a range of research, industry, policy and practice backgrounds who have strategic interests in our interdependent Research Areas (disaster resilience, governance, technology, water, food, agriculture, health and social well-being)). To reflect the international nature of the Institute, the Board Members include representation from Africa and S. Asia and from the UK. Members serve for a three-year term, which can be renewed for a further three years. The NEB meets 4-monthly to discuss collaborative research activities, emergent areas and potential new partnerships and provides advice on the potential to maximise the impact of the Walker Institute’s activities on policy and practice in Africa and S. Asia. This includes technical, institutional and social perspectives. The NEB’s dynamic perspectives will underpin our living research strategy, ensuring relevant links to international programmes and national policy-making initiatives.

The NEB is Chaired by Prof. Rob Wilby (Professor of Hydroclimatic Modelling, Loughborough University) with members including Lord Nigel Crisp (APPG Global Health), Prof. Virginia Murray (Consultant in Global Disaster Risk Reduction with Public Health England; Vice-chair of the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) Scientific and Technical Advisory Group), Dr. Menghestab Haile (World Food Programme), Prof. Aondover Tarhule (Vice Provost, Binghampton University), Dr. Andrew Bennett (President, Tropical Agriculture Association), and Peter Gibbs (Independent Consultant, former BBC Weather forecaster).

**Deans Steering Group (DSG)**

The primary objective of the internal DSG is to provide balanced strategic advice to the Walker Institute on the delivery of the Institute’s objectives and overall progress. It supports the Leadership team on changes to the Strategic Research Priorities and Research Programmes.

Specific tasks for the DSG are:

- Review updates to the Walker Strategic Plan and major initiatives to be pursued.
- Provides strategic inputs to the Walker Institute’s scientific research and in particular makes linkages to other ongoing relevant strategic and/or research initiatives at the University of Reading.
- Identifies evolving challenges and emerging needs that the Walker Institute should address as well as opportunities for new or additional activities
- Advises on how best to engage with other regional research and policy bodies in the UK and internationally to maximise impact.
- Advises on the optimal use of available resources within the Walker Institute and opportunities and scope for the development of any additional activities.

The DSG is drawn from the Senior Management of the University of Reading and provides a broad range of expertise and perspectives. Termly meetings are chaired by the Director of the Walker Institute.

**Advisory Committees, Task Forces and Research Clusters**

In order to bring in independent, strategic thinking to the development and implementation of the Walker Institute, we have established a number of advisory groups, together with the Deans Steering Group (DSG). This includes the Walker Ambassador initiative and the Cross-Division Advisory Platform.

The Cross-Division Advisory Platform is an internal Advisory Group with evolving membership consisting the Walker Ambassadors (separate Terms of Reference available for review) and core researchers from linked Schools (SAGES, SAPD, SBS, SCFP, SMPCS, SPEIR, HBS). The Platform provides guidance and reviews proposals, documents on processes and action plans prepared by the Director and Leadership Team, task forces and Research clusters. Additional tasks include:
Walker Institute Charter

Effective since: 1st January 2019

- Review updates to the strategic plan and a list of major initiatives to be pursued.
- Make recommendations on policy and provide inputs in identifying new areas for collaboration and opportunities for capacity building and resource mobilization.
- Recommend new members.
- Formulate processes for implementation of the Walker Charter.

Standing advisory committees, temporary task forces, research clusters and interest groups facilitate IDR and Knowledge Sharing.

RESOURCES

All transactions both in kind, financial and utilization will be fully transparent. In specific settings, resources may also be developed through international donors, foundations or professional society funding or grants.

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