

## Strategic Development Funded Research Programme Annual Report

This annual report provides an update on the Programme's progress to date against KPIs. It also provides an opportunity to raise issues and discuss opportunities and challenges that may affect the programme activities.

<b>Programme Name:</b>	Sussex Sustainability Research Programme	<b>Planning and Review meeting Chair</b>	Professor Stephen Shute, PVC Planning & Estates
<b>Programme Director</b>	Joseph Alcamo	<b>Programme Manager</b>	Fiona Hurd
<b>SDF investment period</b>	2015-2021	<b>Reporting Period</b>	1 August 2019 - 31 July 2020

### SUMMARY OF REPORT

Beyond the human tragedy, the pandemic has also caused unprecedented disruption of academia and research. Our research, which is based mostly in the Global South, has been unavoidably impaired, although some projects have continued because of well-established local networks. On the home front, SSRP has forged ahead and provided an inspiring platform for discussing and debating how to advance sustainability in the face of the pandemic's impacts. Through the pandemic we have organised an *SSRP Web Forum* on the *Pandemic and Sustainability*; a *Webinar series* on the same topic; *research sandpits* to catalyse new pandemic-related research bids; a multi-session *international Research Symposium* dealing with sustainability, the pandemic and social justice issues; and our research findings have been cited in a new *Parliamentary group report on the pandemic*. **Through these and other activities we are advancing the idea that sustainability science has much to contribute to building back better after the pandemic.**



Before and during the pandemic we have made steady progress in achieving academic and non-academic impact and have helped to boost the University's growing international reputation in sustainability. Since being staffed up in **mid-2017**, SSRP is showing excellent progress in demonstrating its value and achieving its KPIs.

- New research collaborations:** With its mottos of "Science for the SDGs" and "SDG synergies and trade-offs" the SSRP is gaining a solid reputation nationally and internationally. These mottos also provide a flexible and action-oriented umbrella for researchers to come together on campus. Indeed, the SSRP has made considerable strides in building a new and very strong community of sustainability researchers on campus. The SSRP has already supported 30 projects with seed funds and these have blossomed into 27 externally-financed projects and other activities. These activities span **8 Schools and IDS**, including investigators from **15 different departments**. Most of these projects are interdisciplinary or multi-disciplinary. Some are even "deep interdisciplinary" in that they bridge the natural and social sciences. SSRP provides an extensive offering of activities to provide glue for the community such as an annual research symposium, research sandpits, mini-symposia on specific sustainability themes, and workshops on cutting-edge topics such as sustainability research methods.
- Substantial new research income:** The SSRP strategy of investing one-half of its capital of £3.0M on new cross-campus projects has paid off. External **research income** has reached **£6.8M**, which already exceeds its **end-of-programme KPI** by a factor of **46 x**. **Contribution income** has exceeded its **end-of-programme target**. The policy of the SSRP is to quickly re-invest contribution income in Sussex researchers and it has done so with new seed grants, a fund for visiting fellows, and a fund to boost project impact.
- Growing academic impact:** SSRP's research strategy has two main pillars, one top-down and one bottom-up: First, as noted, it promotes 'Science for the SDGs' as a flexible top-down framework for all of its work. Second, it encourages the formation of bottom-up "research clusters" that reflect the interests of sustainability researchers. After a run-time of three years, this strategy is paying off as important SSRP research themes have begun to crystalize. These include: a) Interlinkages among poverty, health and environment; b) People-centred early warning systems; c) Critical transition zones for SDGs; d) Impacts of economic globalization on the SDGs. SSRP researchers have already **published 85+ articles in peer-reviewed journals**, SSRP work is presented in conferences worldwide, and SSRP is preparing, or has already published, **four special issues** of peer-reviewed journals. These special issues document the work of SSRP and/or are edited by SSRP researchers.


- **Achieving non-academic impact at all scales, enhancing the reputation of the University:** The SSRP has a coordinated strategy of delivering impact on the local, national and global levels. SSRP projects have already provided input to seven proposed REF-case studies, four of which were carried forward. Over the last reporting period we have reached a large internal and external audience through our webinars, work-shops, our visibility on the internet (6,485 visits to our website), social media (194,275 impressions on Twitter), and at least 25 news stories were picked up by conventional media outlets, including The Telegraph and BBC.
- **Local impact:** Implementation of global sustainability goals will happen mostly on the ground, so it makes sense that most SSRP projects are local and place-based and that we work closely with local stakeholders and researchers. Our projects are achieving local impact on three continents in the Global South (e.g. identifying a link between climate change, poverty, and HIV in South Africa; improving communication of climate warnings in South India and Kenya; documenting environmental justice violations in Ecuador and Peru). Although these studies have been local in nature, they have generated many lessons that can be scaled up, and we are busy extracting these lessons and conveying them to policymakers and stakeholders at the national and international scale.
- **National impact:** We continuously engage with the Parliament and convey results from local and global SSRP research. We have briefed many MPs, presented at two Party conferences, and were quoted verbatim in a key report of Parliament on the Pandemic and SDGs. We have deepened connections with key national NGOs working on the SDGs.
- **International impact:** The SSRP has an increasingly important international presence: It has represented the worldwide Science and Technology community at the Heads-of-State SDG Summit at the UN General Assembly in NY in September, 2019; co-sponsored a key Side Event with the government of Ghana at the July, 2018 High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development at the UN; organised a Wilton Park International Roundtable on the SDGs in March, 2018.
- **Phase II – Financial sustainability.** Two options for Phase II of the SSRP have been prepared. Option One - *Continuing Operation* which would maintain SSRP’s growing influence as an important institution in the UK and Europe. Option Two – *Worldwide leader* – would establish the SSRP as a major go-to institution worldwide for science for the SDGs and sustainability research.

## 1. SDF spend position

Total SDF allocation	£2,995,445	SDF allocation to 31 July 2020	£2,514,726	SDF spend at 31 July 2020	£2,000,106
Reasons and comments for variances	<p>Due to Covid-19 many planned activities and spending had to be reduced and deferred in accordance with University guidelines in order to preserve cash, this contributed to the underspend for 19/20.</p> <p>The finance department has reported the following: “Additionally, due to a retrospective journal of the contribution sharing arrangement the spend appears lower. The underspend of £542k on the project to date was as a result of spending £307k out of in the year budget of £849k.”</p>				

2.1 Progress against <i>quantitative</i> Key Performance Indicator in this reporting period			
	Key Performance Indicators		Current position <sup>1</sup>
2.1 a	<b>Gross research income</b> will be double the current base line by mid-term of the SDF investment and triple by the end of the investment		
	Baseline research income	Baseline: £146,219 (2014-15)	Total research income from Programme start date to 31 July 2020
	<p><i>Comments:</i> The SSRP adopted a strategy of investing ½ of its £3.0 M capital on seed funding for new cross-campus projects, which in turn submit bids for larger projects. This strategy has paid off: <b>Cumulative Research Income</b> over the duration of SSRP has reached <b>£6.8M</b>, which <b>already exceeds the target for the end of the programme</b> by a <b>factor of 46</b> and <b>more than doubles</b> the original £3M investment of the Strategic Development Fund.</p> <p>SSRP researchers have been very energetic in submitting bids. <b>Total bids submitted</b> amount to <b>&gt; £30.5M</b> since the programme began.</p>		
2.1 b	<b>Three external bids of &gt;£1M</b> Sussex value will be submitted by mid-term of the investment and 6 by the end of the investment		
	<p><i>Comments:</i> To date, <b>six external bids of more than £1 million</b> have been submitted by SSRP researchers. <b>This meets the mid-term and end of programme target.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ESRC grant “Reimagining Infrastructure: how is marginalised people’s food and nutrition security shaped by a continuum of urban infrastructure assemblages” £1,460,000 (successful)</li> <li>2. NERC grant “Towards Forecast-based Preparedness Action” of £1,033,743 (successful)</li> <li>3. BBSRC Doctoral Training Programme. SSRP is part of a consortium bidding on a BBSRC DTP on “Sustainable Food Future (PSFF): Growing Leadership for Resilient, Healthy &amp; Inclusive Food Systems”. Consortium includes Uni Greenwich, University College London, Royal Veterinary College, and five others of £4,999,959 (awaiting decision)</li> <li>4. NORAD Norway’s International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI) bid on “Reform in the forestry sector of Guinea-Bissau, The Gambia and Liberia in response to the West African Rosewood Crisis. Addressing Trafficking in Endangered Species” of £3,112,401 (unsuccessful)</li> </ol>		

<sup>1</sup> Green: on track to achieve KPI; Amber: some issues causing delays to KPI achievement; Red: significant issues which may result in KPI not being achieved.

	<p>5. ESRC grant “Centre for Transformative Climate Change Research” of £3,384,046 (unsuccessful)</p> <p>6. ESRC grant “NEW-SYNERGIES: New Methodology to exploit synergies among the Sustainable Development Goals of £1,697,750 (unsuccessful)</p>																																					
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	<p><i>Comments:</i></p> <p><b>2.2 d.1 Making a difference <u>inside</u> the University</b></p> <p>The SSRP is making a significant difference inside the University in two main ways:</p> <p>(i) by building a new and very strong community of sustainability researchers on campus, and</p> <p>(ii) by organising numerous events on campus to stimulate and solidify research collaborations and raise awareness about critical sustainability issues.</p>																																					

## 2.2 d.1.1 Making a difference inside the university – Part I. Building the research community

### New Collaborative Research Projects

An essential part of building the community of sustainability researchers has been to foster numerous new research collaborations across campus, most of which are interdisciplinary or multi-disciplinary. Some are even “deep interdisciplinary” in that they bring together the natural and social sciences. The SSRP has already served as an **umbrella** for **30 internally financed projects and 27 externally financed SSRP flagged bids**.

These projects span **8 Schools and IDS**, including investigators from **15 different departments**. Figure 1 shows PMG members, principal investigators, co-investigators and post docs involved in projects across SSRP. These projects bring together researchers from across and beyond the SSRP core Schools including Engineering/Informatics, the Medical School, Maths & Physical Sciences and Media, Arts & Humanities.

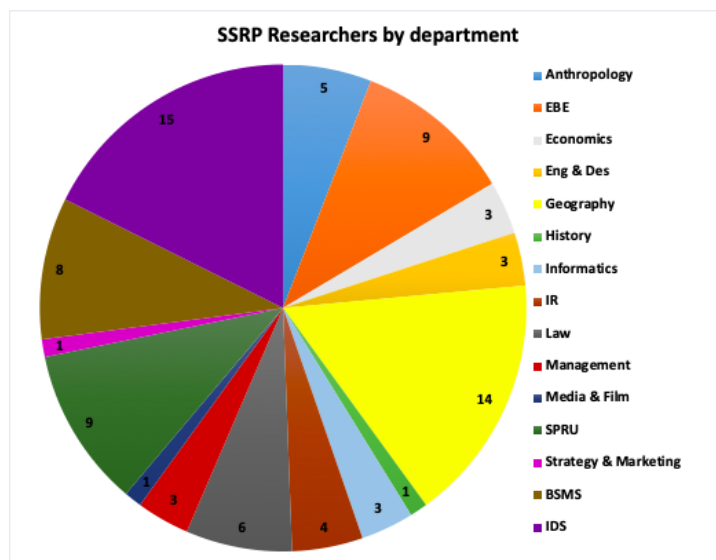


Figure 1. SSRP researchers by department

### Mapping Sustainability Researchers at Sussex

SSRP is also helping to build the sustainability research community on campus by carrying out a comprehensive mapping exercise to identify researchers engaged in sustainability and international development research (supported by a grant from the University’s GCRF QR allocation). The product of this exercise will be a user-friendly database of sustainability researchers which will greatly help with finding partners on campus for new research bids and new research activities. During this reporting period a test version of the database has been built. An operational version will be available for Sussex academic and professional services staff, students as well as those outside of the University in early 2021.

### Online Catalogue on Methods for Sustainability Research

Another activity in this reporting period that has helped to build the research community was the launch of the [“SSRP Online Catalogue of Sustainability Research Methods”](#). Since sustainability research covers so many different disciplines, this catalogue helps bridge disciplinary gaps by informing researchers about methods used in disciplines outside of their

own. It provides an opportunity for researchers to learn about methods potentially applicable to their new interdisciplinary projects. The catalogue is organised in a very user-friendly manner and is freely accessible to all staff at Sussex.

#### **The SSRP Visiting Fellowship fund**

This Fund was launched in July 2019 to deepen collaborations with partners especially in DAC list countries, strengthen SSRP's international research network of SSRP, and increase the presence on campus of top sustainability researchers from abroad. This Fund is financed by our contribution income, and is an example of SSRP policy to quickly recycle the financial gains of the programme back to the researchers. Due to Covid-19 and enforced travel restrictions this scheme has been temporarily paused with a view to reviewing it as the situation develops.

Before the pandemic the Fund was used to host Dr Lily Rodriguez from Centro de Conservación, Investigación y Manejo de Areas Naturales (CIMA) – the NGO partner of our project on supply chains in forest communities in Peru.

#### **Sussex Sustainability Assembly & the Sustainable University**

The first campus-wide Sussex Sustainability Assembly was held on 19 February 2020 to discuss the university's response to the climate emergency and how the University can be more sustainable. SSRP had a high profile at the event. The event was co-organised by SSRP Board Member Jörn Scharlemann and the Students' Union, and was attended by over 330 staff and students. Joseph Alcamo presented to the Assembly about SSRP research and scaling up for local and global impact. Chris Sandom, another SSRP Board Member, talked about creating a 'Living Lab' on campus to co-create the sustainable vision of the University.

The Assembly showed that there was wide support for making Sussex an exceptional sustainability university. SSRP is looking forward to working on this task with the University's new Sustainability Manager, Samantha Waugh. SSRP has already begun working with her on boosting the University's teaching offering on sustainability studies and on strengthening the University's contributions to the SDGs.

#### **What our community has to say about SSRP**

Below are reflections of a few researchers at Sussex about the SSRP. Several more quotes are given in Appendix 3.

*My research interests are fundamentally interdisciplinary, something that is also a key feature of the School of Global Studies. Hence, SSRP has been fundamental for my work in two specific ways: first, it linked me with fantastic researchers across campus; second, it allowed to fund some interdisciplinary research activities (which are very difficult to fund), some of which attracted external funding (e.g., ESRC Secondary Data). **Pedram Rowhani - School of Global Studies***

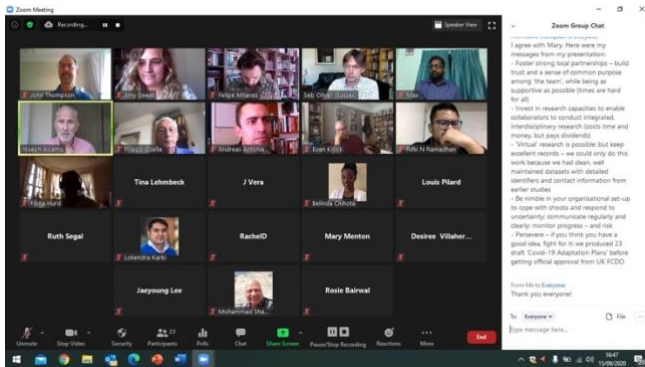
*We were extremely grateful to receive a seed funding from the SSRP with the deliberate aim of seeking a large GCRF grant to pursue cross-country work on the nexus of urban food, health and nutrition issues affecting poor urban dwellers. We were successful in raising £1.5m FEC through a recent GCRF call ... The funding allowed us to ... hold a bid writing workshop with key institutions [... in Africa and India]. We feel such seed funding activities are critical to the SSRP being able to leverage future funding and influence in this way. **Nick Nisbett, Dolf te Lintelo, Hayley McGregor and Jodie Thorpe - Institute of Development Studies***

*SSRP has provided quite a bit of support to LPS, awarding direct seed funding to a number of projects involving LPS researchers and encouraging LPS faculty to engage in interdisciplinary research and*

submit funding proposals with colleagues around the University through hosting numerous events and workshops facilitating collaboration. SSRP has funded and promoted my research on sustainability and trade, making possible the policy impact I have claimed in my Impact Case Study. **Emily Lydgate - School of Law, Politics and Sociology**

Before SSRP I had little idea what research was going on outside Life Sciences, and had no idea that Sussex was so well placed to conduct truly inter-disciplinary research that can, and is, making a major contribution to the huge sustainability challenges that lie ahead for humanity. **Dave Goulson – School of Life Sciences**

SSRP has provided an invaluable opportunity to conduct interdisciplinary sustainability research while being based in the University of Sussex Business School. As an Early Career Researcher, it has supported my research with colleagues in the Business School and across Sussex, and has led to successful follow-up funding, the establishment of internal and external networks, and the co-development of several research outputs. **Izabela Delabre - Business School**



Photos of the SSRP community pre- and post-Covid.

## 2.2 d.1.2 Making a Difference Inside the University – Part II. Internal events & activities

SSRP catalyses and supports research by organising events that solidify collaboration, raise awareness about critical sustainability issues, and create space to learn from other researchers – particularly with regards to adapting research processes, techniques and outputs during the pandemic.

i) Forging Through the Pandemic SSRP Moves Ahead with Sustainability Research

On top of the human tragedy, the pandemic has also caused unprecedented disruption to academia and research. Our research, which is based mostly in the Global South, has to an extent interrupted. But some projects, built on longstanding networks in the Global South, have been able to continue as local partners have picked up the slack and virtual meetings have substituted for face-to-face activities. In this way, our projects in the Wanar forest in New Guinea, on the edge of the Amazon in Peru, and at other locations have continued.

On the home front, SSRP has forged ahead and provides an inspiring platform for discussion. In mind, we have organised a wide range of activities during the pandemic:

15-16 September 2020) The third annual research symposium, focusing largely on pandemic themes, was held virtually this year. An advantage of being online was that research partners in Peru, Brazil, India and Zambia could present their work, and people from across the UK and around the world could participate. Researchers from six Sussex schools plus IDS took part, as well as the Head of the School of Global Studies and a Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research. The Symposium dealt with timely topics such as Pandemic Preparedness, Research Tactics, Norms, and the Role of the State. Find the programme, presentations and recordings on SSRP [event webpage](#)

19 September 2020) A day of research and discussion on the pandemic and refugees. A day of research and discussion on the pandemic and refugees. SSRP [SSRP's role in the pandemic and sustainability](#)

Webinar series: the pandemic and sustainability. Because of the success of the Web Forum (previous point) the SSRP organised a Webinar series building on topics from the Forum. These included [the pandemic and biodiversity](#), [the pandemic and inequality](#) and [the pandemic and climate change](#). More webinars will be presented shortly.

Sandpits: To catalyse new ideas for pandemic-related sustainability research bids we have organised cross-disciplinary sandpits. To date, 3 sandpits have been held: the pandemic and food system resilience; the pandemic, poverty and the SDGs; and the pandemic, biodiversity and zoonotic diseases. These sandpits were led by the research team.

Parliamentary group report on the Pandemic. SSRP submitted both written and verbal [testimony](#) to a Parliamentary group inquiry on the pandemic and was [Building Back Better: The SDGs as a roadmap for recovery](#) (See Section 2.2 for more details)



## ii) Other events on campus to promote research and exchange knowledge

- **SSRP Research Cluster Meetings** – Three ‘mini-symposia’ were held before the pandemic. These symposia focused on cross-cutting themes emerging from SSRP research: “Planetary Health and the SDGs”, “Environmental justice, rights-based approaches and the SDGs”, and “Climate and Food. These events were used by the research community to explore new joint projects, to coordinate new peer-reviewed articles, and to develop policy briefs and other products for achieving further academic and societal impact. More ‘mini symposia’ are planned for autumn/winter 2020 (see section 6).
- **‘Forest defenders on the front line’ teach out** (2 March 2020) - Dr Mary Menton hosted a ‘teach out’ during the strike period on campus alongside Dr Andrea Brock and Dr Mika Peck, as well as Fran Lambrick from environmental campaign group [Not1More](#), and Claudelice Santos, a Brazilian forest defender. The objectives of this event were to share the work of Mary Menton and the NGO’s she works with the University of Sussex campus.
- **SSRP Fellowship event: ‘Transforming food production and consumption for the post-2020 biodiversity agenda’** (20 February 2020) - As part of the SSRP Visiting Fellowship Scheme, Dr Lily Rodriguez (President of Peruvian conservation and research NGO – the Centre of Conservation, Research and Management, CIMA) presented to the SSRP community on biodiversity targets and sustainable production and consumption goals. (see section 2.2, d.1.1)

## 2.2 d.2 Making a difference outside the University

### 2.2 d.2.1 Projects in the Global South

SSRP researchers are working in 15 low and medium income countries and achieving local impact on four continents in the Global South (e.g. helping to establish a public health programme in Wanang forest of New Guinea; improving communication of climate warnings in South India and Kenya; raising awareness of environmental justice issues in Ecuador). More information about the impact of current SSRP projects is given in Section 2.2 h.3 and Box 2.

### 2.2 d.2.2 SSRP Contributes to Parliamentary Inquiry

In July, 2020 the SSRP submitted [written testimony](#) to a Parliamentary Group Inquiry on the Pandemic and the SDGs. Subsequently, SSRP’s research findings were quoted five times in the report of the Inquiry entitled: ‘Building Back Better: The SDGs as a roadmap for recovery’, published 14 September 2020. [Read the full report](#) and the [Sussex news story here](#). This achievement is a result of successfully interacting with the Committee responsible for the Inquiry – the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on the UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development – and its Chair, Lord Jack McConnell. Lord McConnell was the keynote speaker at the 2019 SSRP Symposium.

### 2.2 d.2.3 SSRP organises and co-hosts national and international events

SSRP organises or co-sponsors numerous national and international events that address cutting edge sustainability issues. Here is a selection of such events during the last reporting period. SSRP has been very active in these events despite the restrictions of working from home for the majority of this reporting year:

**International Global Goals Virtual Symposium 2020** (9-11 June 2020) SSRP co-sponsored the international Global Goals symposium led by Utrecht University. SSRP Deputy Director John Thompson co-organised the symposium and provided a keynote on 'crisis as opportunity'. SSRP researchers Izabela Delabre and Pedram Rowhani, alongside Richard Jolly, Jo Howard and Jackie Shaw, organised panels and interviews. SSRP is considering taking the lead on the Global Goals Symposium 2021.

**Workshop on: UK Earth Law Judgments** (1 July 2020) - Convened by Helen Dancer and Bonnie Holligan, this workshop sought to re-imagine legal judgments from an eco-centric perspective. The workshop engaged with academics from a range of backgrounds, as well as legal professionals and the broader public.

**Wild Law Conference** (9 November 2019) - SSRP co-sponsored the [UK Environmental Law Association "Wild Law" conference](#). The conference theme of *Wild Law and Activism* brought together legal practitioners, activists, NGO professionals, academics, students and the general public to explore the connections between eco-centric perspectives on law and the wave of environmental activism globally.

### 2.2 d.2.4 SSRP research results presented at national and international events

During the last reporting period SSRP researchers have given many presentations at national and international academic events to convey SSRP findings about SDG interactions, SDG implementation, and other cutting-edge sustainability issues. The following are the subset of these presentations given by SSRP Director, Joseph Alcamo. We also mention a national landscape innovation conference organised by SSRP PMG member, Chris Sandom.

**United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Heads of State Summit, New York (25-27 September 2019)** - Joseph Alcamo was selected as one of three scientists to represent the global science community at the international Heads of State Summit on Sustainable Development Goals.

**Labour and Conservative Party Conferences:** (23 September 2019, Brighton & 1 October 2019, Manchester) - Joseph Alcamo spoke at the Conservative and Labour party conferences at events organised by *Prospect* magazine in association with Heathrow Airport entitled 'The Big Environment Talk'. Among other things, he proposed an "Air travel free zone Europe" as a way of reaching climate goals.

**Wilton Park conference on Higher Education 'Global engagement to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals 2030'** (27-28 January 2020) - Joseph Alcamo spoke on the topic of "aligning the climate and SDG agendas" at this event co-sponsored by Wilton Park, the Association of Commonwealth Universities, and the University of Sussex.

**BOND webinar** (29 April 2020) – BOND is the UK network for organisations working in international development. Joseph Alcamo was invited by BOND to give a webinar on '[New findings on trade-offs and synergies among the SDGs](#)'. This was a good opportunity to make contact and discuss SSRP results with key sustainability stakeholders in the UK.

**Global Partnerships Virtual Conference** (25-26 June 2020) - Joseph Alcamo presented the keynote speech for the Sussex Global Engagement virtual [Global Partnerships Conference](#) 'Internationalisation and the Global Sustainability Challenge' following VC Adam Tickell's welcome. Joseph presented ideas for strengthening 'Partnerships for Sustainability in Higher Education' emphasising three key pillars for universities to build resilience and capacity: teaching, policy/advocacy, and research.

**Virtual Global Engagement workshop with the University of Ghana and Renmin University of China** (17 June 2020) – This was an inter-university workshop co-organised by the University of Sussex, IDS, and institutions in Ghana and China to explore the opportunities for collaboration focussing on COVID-19 impacts on global poverty alleviation. Joseph Alcamo presented new results from SSRP's projects on the interlinkage between poverty, health, and environment. This event followed on from the SSRP-University of Ghana workshop on '[shaping thinking on science for the Sustainable Development Goals](#)' held in Ghana in July 2019.

**University of Sussex Landscape Innovation Conference** (23 January 2020) Chris Sandom organised and presented at this conference, co-organised with Sussex Wildlife Trust. The conference aimed to stimulate new approaches to the multi-purpose land use, rewilding, and other cutting-edge issues of land use in the UK.

#### **2.2 d.2.5 Media Coverage of SSRP**

SSRP research results are also making a difference outside the campus by being reported regularly in national and international media. During the last reporting period, the SSRP findings have been reported on at least 25 occasions in media as diverse as The Telegraph, Scientific American, BBC World Service and TV News Kenya. A list of SSRP's coverage in the media is given in Appendix 4. Other data regarding SSRP's website and social media engagement are given in Section 2.2 g1 .



**SSRP Director, Joseph Alcamo, representing science community at SDG Heads of State Summit, UN General Assembly, September, 2019.**

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Are programme-flagged applications submitted to a **diverse portfolio of funders?**

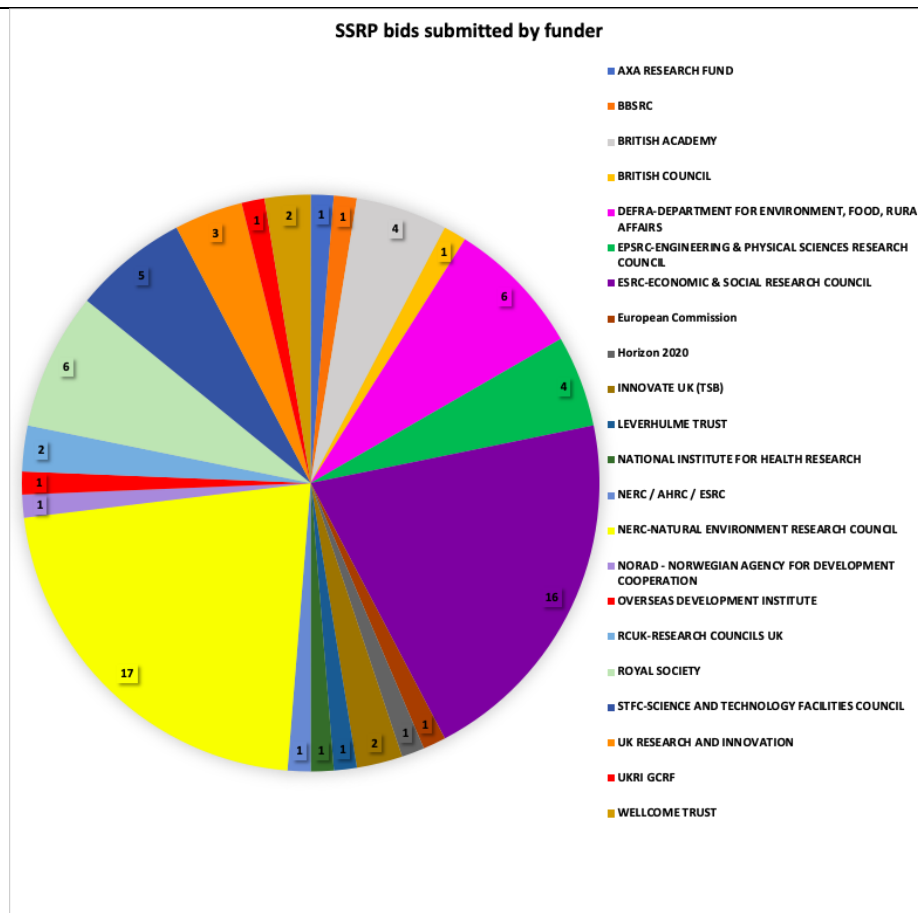


Figure 2: SSRP bids submitted by funder (cumulative across programme)

*Comments:*

SSRP flagged applications have been submitted to a diverse range of funders from research councils, to charities and government. Figure 2 presents the spread of applications submitted over the lifetime of the programme. Bids, as expected, are most frequently directed to the largest source of funds for sustainability research in the UK – the ESRC and NERC. Nevertheless, SSRP bids have been targeted at 20 other potential donors. SSRP encourages its community to submit bids to a diverse portfolio of funders and is continuously providing information about funding calls from these funders.

2.2 f	<p><b>Research capacity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How has the SDF investment grown capacity at Sussex in this area? Include details on research activity and income generated by staff directly funded from the SDF investment plus current levels of PhD studentships.</li> <li>• Has external income been generated to cover costs of researcher salaries and studentships?</li> </ul>
	<p><i>Comments:</i></p> <p>The SDF investment in SSRP has led to a substantial increase in the capacity of young researchers at Sussex.</p> <p>Seed funding provided by SSRP to various projects has led to the creation of 20 post-doctoral researcher posts. These posts have been working on high quality, highly interdisciplinary or multi-disciplinary research projects which is leading to further external funding, with the intention of supporting the researchers beyond the life of SSP funding. Follow-up and associated projects have extended or created <i>an additional</i> &gt; 20 post-doctoral posts. Through this process we are building and growing a cohort of researchers experienced in interdisciplinary working.</p> <p>In July 2020 SSRP was part of a consortium bid for BBSRC Doctoral Training Programme on the topic of “Sustainable Food Future: Growing Leadership for Resilient, Healthy &amp; Inclusive Food Systems”. The total bid submitted was for £4,999,959 and would translate to two fully funded PhD studentships for Sussex over four years.</p> <p>Working in collaboration with the Development and Alumni Relations Office (DARO) SSRP assisted the University in securing a gift donation from Peter Carpenter towards 3 fully funded PhD scholarships on African climate change. SSRP contributed by designating one of its posts as a “Peter Carpenter Research Fellow”. The total donation including gift aid amounts to £340,460.00.</p> <p>Research Income amounting to about £6.8M has been acquired by the SSRP and goes mostly to research salaries, especially to salaries of young researchers.</p>
2.2g	<p><b>Reputation:</b> provide indicators of the Programme’s success in gaining:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public reputation</li> <li>• Academic reputation</li> <li>• International recognition</li> <li>• External collaborations</li> </ul>
	<p><i>Comments:</i></p> <p><b>2.2 g.1 Public reputation</b></p> <p><b>Events</b></p> <p>One way SSRP has enhanced its reputation and that of the University is to host public events at least annually in Brighton &amp; Hove. One example was the participatory ‘What’s the future of coffee?’ event in May 2019 which engaged roasters, café owners, waste experts, academics and the general public. Due to the pandemic-related restrictions, we have been unable to host an in-person public event in 2020. However, SSRP’s webinar series was open to a general audience and attracted 140 attendees. One-third of these were from the general public and 11% were from external organisations such as WWF, Environment Agency, and</p>

ODI. This high engagement with our online events show that SSRP is becoming well known with general audiences and the public.

In addition, other key SSRP associated events actively encouraged public participation such as the Wild Law conference (November 2019) and Sussex Landscape Innovation conference (January 2020) which was co-hosted with the Sussex Wildlife Trust.

### **Website Viewings**

Another way to enhance SSRP's reputation and that of the University is to offer a website that conveys the research of the programme in an attractive and informative way. From September 2019 to September 2020, the total number of SSRP website visits was 6,485 – an increase of 71% on the same period last year (3,801 visits).

The total number of pages viewed in this period is 22,176, and apart from the homepage, the first blog in the SSRP forum on the pandemic and sustainability received the most hits (1,268 views).

An external audience accounts for 91% of all of these web visits.

### **Print and Digital Media**

As mentioned in section d.2.5, SSRP findings have been reported on at least 25 occasions in national and international media as diverse as The Telegraph, Scientific American, BBC World Service and TV News Kenya. A list of SSRP's coverage in the media is given in Appendix 4.

### **Social Media**

Twitter provides a valuable platform for conveying the highlights from SSRP's research to a wide and younger audience. Over the last reporting period, SSRP's twitter account has had 194,275 impressions (the number of times people saw SSRP Tweets) and 3,247 total Twitter profile visits. Over the same period the number of SSRP Twitter followers grew by one-third. Much of this engagement with SSRP's tweets occurred during the height of the pandemic suggesting we attracted the interest of a wide audience with activities such as the *SSRP web forum* and *webinar series on "The Pandemic and Sustainability"*. SSRP created a LinkedIn account within this reporting period, which already has dozens of followers. In the Altmetrics report (Appendix 5) over the last year, there have been 7,767 Twitter mentions, 707 news mentions and 123 blog mentions that directly referenced the 40 SSRP research outputs measured in this report.

## **2.2 g.2 Campus reputation**

SSRP researchers and their findings have featured in **23 Sussex news stories** during this reporting period (See Appendix 4).

The numerous SSRP events held on campus, face-to-face and virtually, have contributed to raising awareness about SSRP and sustainability issues among University students and staff (See Section 2.2 d.1.2) .

Nearly 300 subscribers receive the monthly *Sussex Sustainability Bulletin* containing news, events, opportunities and successes in the sustainability community at Sussex. [Click here to view September 2020 bulletin.](#)

## 2.2 g.2 Academic reputation

SSRP's research strategy has two main pillars, one top-down and one bottom-up:

First, top-down, it promotes "Science for the SDGs" with particular accent on "SDG synergies and trade-offs" as a flexible framework for all of SSRP's work, and to provide a unifying theme.

Second, the SSRP encourages the formation of bottom-up "research clusters" which reflects the interests of researchers. After a run-time of three+ years, this strategy is paying off as important SSRP research themes have begun to crystalize. A few examples include: a) Poverty, health and environment; b) People-centred early warning systems; c) Critical transition zones for SDGs; d) Impacts of economic globalization on the SDGs. (See Box 1).

SSRP researchers have already published around **85+ articles in peer-reviewed journals**, and their work has been presented in conferences worldwide.

SSRP is preparing, or already published, **four special issues** of peer-reviewed journals. These special issues document the work of SSRP and/or are edited by SSRP researchers:

- Special Feature of *Sustainability Science* journal on "Exploring Interactions among the Sustainable Development Goals: Case Studies from Three Continents".
- Special Issue of *Sustainability* journal on: "Water Quality Interlinkages with SDGs".
- Special Issue of *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems* journal, on "Governance and Politics of Climate Smart Agriculture"
- Special Issue of *Land* journal on "Sustainability and Rainforest Communities: Technological and Social Innovations for the UN Sustainable Development Goals"

### Box 1 Some existing and emerging research themes of SSRP

Since the last annual report, SSRP has further developed its research themes. Here are some examples (not exhaustive) of these themes:

#### a) Poverty, health and environment

The interlinkage between poverty, health and environment is being researched in three separate projects under the SSRP umbrella, including the impact of drought on vulnerability of poor people to HIV in KwaZulu-Natal; the disproportionate impact of air pollution on the health of low-income people in Delhi and Beijing, and the complex relationship between poverty, forest conservation and public health in the Wanang Forest of New Guinea. Collectively, these studies have the potential to generate new ideas for comprehensive public policies to deal with poverty, public health risks and environmental degradation.

#### b) People-centred early warning systems

In farming communities in Kenya and fisher communities in South India, research has found that "people-centred early warning systems" for extreme weather events (national early warning systems tuned to the needs of specific communities and locales) can help these communities adapt to extreme weather conditions related to climate variability (SDG 13), as well as protect their livelihoods (SDG 8). Consequently, these early warning systems also increase the food security of farmers and fishers and the communities they provide food for (SDG 2).

#### c) Critical transition zones for SDGs – Forest margins and peri-urban zones

SSRP researchers have identified a land category particularly important to implementation of the SDGs. They have dubbed these areas "critical transition zones" where land use changes are rapid relative to surrounding areas, and where inhabitants are particularly vulnerable to change. Because of these characteristics, we expect that people living within these zones have particular difficulties in achieving the SDGs. Critical transition zones can therefore serve as test beds of SDG implementation. SSRP research is focusing on two types of these zones – peri-urban areas (Wuhan, China) and forest margins (in Ecuador, Peru, and New Guinea).

**d) Impacts of economic globalization on the SDGs**

SSRP researchers have found economic globalisation to have an important impact on achieving the SDGs. For example, international trade and global supply chains can lead to transboundary environmental impacts that hinder several SDGs, and international debt severely reduces the competence of many countries to fund programmes needed to achieve the education, environmental, and other SDGs. However, SSRP research has also shown that global solutions can help move the SDGs forward. These solutions include “sustainable supply chain management” and sustainability assessments embedded in international trade agreements.

**e) Other examples of SSRP research themes are:** Synergy Drivers as opportunities for advancing multiple SDGs; SDG governance and a rights-based approach to the SDGs; South coast land use and sustainability issues; natural science and social science methods of sustainability research; gaps in global environmental treaties; Remote sensing applications to sustainability studies

**2.2 g.3 International and national reputation**

Over the last reporting period, the SSRP has continued to enhance its international and national reputation through the numerous events and activities documented under Section 2.2 d.2 “Making a difference outside the University”. A few highlights from these activities were:

- The SSRP was one of two institutions of the University of Sussex mentioned in The Times Good University Guide.
- SSRP has been quoted in the new important Parliamentary group report on ‘Building Back Better: The SDGs as a roadmap for recovery’.
- The SSRP Director, Joseph Alcamo, was selected as one of three scientists to represent the global science community at the international Heads of State Summit on Sustainable Development Goals.
- Over a one year period, the SSRP website was visited 6,485 times – an increase of 71% on the same period last year.
- During the last reporting period, the SSRP findings have been reported on at least 25 occasions in media as diverse as The Telegraph, Scientific American, BBC World Service and TV News Kenya.

**2.2 g.4 External collaborations**

SSRP is very outward-facing and nearly all of its projects involve external collaborations (Table 1). These numerous collaborations are also a major contributor to our national and international reputation. These partnerships not only raise the profile of the programme and Sussex, but also help the SSRP to carry out excellent research with impact, and to have good partners for new funding bids.



**Table 1: Listing of collaborators and stakeholders in SSRP funded and flagged projects.**

<p><b><u>UK local stakeholders</u></b> Brighton &amp; Hove Allotment Federation Brighton &amp; Hove Food Partnership Brighton &amp; Hove Man and Biosphere Buglife Bumblebee Conservation Trust Buzz Club</p>	<p>Falcon Coffees Freegle Girls Who Grind Coffee Grown in Britain Pro Baristas Small Batch Coffee Roasters South Downs National Park Sussex Wildlife Trust Tangent Energy</p>	<p><b><u>UK Government</u></b> All-Party Parliamentary Group on the SDGs Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) Foreign, Commonwealth &amp; Development Office (FCDO)</p>	<p>Office for National Statistics (ONS) UK Environment Agency (EA) UK Met Office</p>
<p><b><u>International – Country level</u></b> American University in Cairo, Egypt Africa Health Research Institute (AHRI), South Africa African Population Health Research Centre, Kenya Armauer Hansen Research Institute, Ethiopia Banaras Hindu University, India Bangladesh High Commission Beijing Normal University, China Coral Conservation and Community Development, Creative Action Tank (CAT), Indonesia Centre for Pollination Studies Calcutta, India Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), India Central University of Finance and Economics, China Centre for Climate Change Studies/Institute of Resource Assessment-University of Dar es Salaam Centre for Infectious Disease Research in Zambia (CIDRZ) Centro de Conservación Investigación y Manejo de Areas Naturales (CIMA), Peru</p>	<p>Corbana, Costa Rica Dublin Institute of Technology Embassy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia Eritrean Institute of Technology (EIT), Eritrea Future Agriculture Consortium and Technical University of Mombasa, Kenya Ghana High Commission Icafe, Costa Rica ICPAC – IGAS Climate Prediction and Applications Centre, Kenya IGAD Regional Food Security and Nutrition Steering Group, Kenya Indonesia Program Lead (PM), Coral Conservation and Community Development India Meteorological Department (IMD) Indian Institute of Human Settlements (India) Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) Institute of Endemic Diseases, University of Khartoum, Sudan Instituto Centro de Vida (ICV), Brazil</p>	<p>JP Grant School of Public Health, Bangladesh Kenya Meteorological Department Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS) Maastricht University Marine Science and Research Centre for Pacific Marine Resources, University of Papua (UNIPA), Manokwari, Indonesia National Cancer Institute, Cairo University, Egypt National Drought Management Authority (NDMA), Kenya New Guinea Binatang Research Centre NOPOKI-UCSS, Peru Ocean State Forecast Services, India Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Tajikistan Papua New Guinea Institute of Medical Research Papua New Guinea University of Technology Peoples Science Institute, India Research Centre for Pacific Marine Resources, University of Papua (UNIPA)</p>	<p>Rwanda Ministry of Agriculture San Francisco University, Quito, Ecuador Sokoine University of Agriculture, Tanzania State Disaster Management Authority, India State Emergency Operations Centre, Thiruvananthapuram, India Toxicslink NGO, India Universidad de Costa Rica Universidade do Estado da Bahia, Brazil Universidad Federal do Reconcavo de Bahia, Brazil Universidad Nacional Intercultural de la Amazonía - UNIA, Peru University of Buea, Cameroon University of Cape Town, South Africa University of California, UCSF Centre of Vulnerable Population University of Economics and Law, Wuhan, China University of Ghana University of Science and Technology (CUSAT) Utrecht University</p>
<p><b><u>International – Global</u></b> Bats without Borders Convention on Biological Diversity Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) International Water Management Institute</p>	<p>International Water Management Institute Scaling Up Nutrition Civil Society Network Stop TB Partnership UN Environment (UNEP)</p>	<p><b><u>Others - UK</u></b> BOND Chatham House Conservation Research Africa Environmental Funders Network London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine National Trust Not1More</p>	<p>Overseas Development Institute Pesticide Action Network (PAN) Save the Children UK UK National Farmers Union Vision 2030 Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) Wilton Park WWF UK</p>

2.2  
h

**Impact: detail**

- Work in progress towards potential REF impact case studies and other kinds of non-academic impact that has been fostered by the Programme
- Non-academic engagement in the Programme’s research

*Comments:*

**2.2 h.1 SSRP input into REF impact studies**

**Table 2. SSRP projects have provided input to the following REF case studies:**

Title of REF case study	Authors	School	Status
Conserving Bumblebees [and their consequences on biodiversity]	Prof Dave Goulson	Life Sciences	Going into REF 2021
The Conservation of Tropical Rainforests in Papua New Guinea and Ecuador	Dr Mika Peck Dr Alan Stewart	Life Sciences	Going into REF 2021
Informing post-Brexit UK trade policy	Dr Emily Lydgate Dr Kamala Dawar Dr Erika Szyszczak	LPS	Going into REF 2021
Improved climate information for risk management	Prof Martin Todd	Global Studies	TBC

**Table 3. SSRP projects also provided input to the following proposed REF case studies that were not taken forward:**

Title of proposed REF case study	Authors	School	Status
Forecasting with fishers: Co-producing weather knowledge for safe and sustainable artisanal fishing in south India	Prof. Filippo Osella Dr Max Martin	Global Studies	Not submitted
Assessing trade-offs and synergies in SDG targets from global commodity chains associated with environmental justice	Dr Alan Stewart Dr Mary Menton	Life Sciences	Not submitted
Mapping indigenous rights violations	Dr Mary Menton	Life Sciences	Not submitted

**2.2 h.2 Non-academic engagement in SSRP research**

There are many ways in which non-academics are involved in SSRP research:

- SSRP has projects in 15 low- and medium-income countries, and many local stakeholders are partners in our projects. Table 1 includes many of our local partners.
- SSRP regularly runs academic events open to the public which engage numerous non-academic people. See Section 2.2 g.1
- SSRP researchers often convey research findings at policy events and interact with policymakers. For example, the SSRP Director Joseph Alcamo spoke at two party conferences during the last reporting period. See Section 2.2 d.2.4
- BOND is a network for international development organisations such as NGOs and charities, and SSRP engaged BOND’s members at a [webinar hosted in April 2020](#). (Also mentioned in Section 2.2 d.2).
- Many non-academics visit our webinars and website and follow us on Twitter. See Section 2.2 d.2.4

## 2.2 h.3 The SSRP Impact Strategy

### Introduction

One of the key aims of sustainability science is to have impact. Accordingly, the SSRP has a coordinated strategy for delivering impact on the local, national and global levels. Through a “pathways to impact” exercise we identified key stakeholders to work with to achieve impact.

One group of key stakeholders are local non-academic communities in low- and medium-income countries, and most of our projects have to do with these communities. In these projects we achieve impact by working with local stakeholders and researchers (see Box 2 for examples).

Although these projects are local, they provide many lessons that are scalable and relevant to achieving the SDGs in other communities and countries. Therefore, another part of our strategy is to distil out transferable lessons from our local projects and convey them to another important stakeholder group -- national UK policymakers and international policymakers. For example, we have conveyed lessons from our local projects in a written submission to the Committees of Parliament. (See Section 2.2 d.2.2)

In addition, a subset of SSRP projects are national/global in scale (impact of international debt on capacity to achieve the SDGs, role of global supply chains in SDG implementation) and this research also provides important new knowledge for national/global policymakers. For example, SSRP researcher Dr. Emily Lydgate briefed MPs on the results of her project on trade and the environment. Hence, another part of our impact strategy is to convey SDG-relevant lessons that are transboundary in nature to the appropriate national or international officials.

### Local Impact

After a running time of 2 or 3 years, SSRP projects are now beginning to bear fruit and findings are having an impact at local level in 15 low- and middle-income countries in Africa (Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Rwanda, South Africa, Egypt, Zambia, Zimbabwe), Asia (India, China, Sri Lanka), Latin America (Brazil, Ecuador), Oceania (Papua New Guinea), and in the UK. Some examples are given in Box 2. Some projects have run long enough to already contribute to REF Case Studies (Table 2).

### National Impact

We continuously engage with the Parliament and convey results from SSRP research, e.g. on combining conservation and public health policies, and on minimising trade-offs among the SDGs. We have given briefings to several Members of Parliament and Parliamentary group committees.

- SSRP submitted both written and verbal [testimony](#) to a Parliamentary group inquiry on the pandemic and was quoted five times in their report ‘Building Back Better: The SDGs as a roadmap for recovery’. (See Section 2.2 for more details)
- A policy brief titled ‘[Sustainable Development Goals in the Debt Trap](#)’ based on SSRP research by Andreas Antoniadou and Alexander Antonarakis was published and circulated among prominent Parliamentarians in June 2020.
- The SSRP Director spoke on sustainability issues at two UK Party conferences.
- In an earlier reporting period, SSRP co-organised a Parliamentary Reception at which SSRP researchers met with several MPs to discuss the results of their research and the

importance of an integrative approach to the SDGs.  
More examples are given in Section 2.2 d.2.

### **International impact**

The SSRP has a growing impact and presence in international arenas as a champion of 'Science for the SDGs'. Some examples are:

- The SSRP Director represented the worldwide Science and Technology Community at the Heads-of-State SDG Summit at the UN General Assembly in NY, September, 2019.
- The University of Ghana and SSRP organised an Expert Workshop in Accra, Ghana on "Science for Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals" in June, 2019. The workshop included a dialogue between experts and some top government policymakers involved in SDG implementation in Ghana.
- SSRP researcher Jody Harris' contributed to a Commentary published in the Lancet in June, 2019 calling on the WHO and UN agencies to bring rights more squarely into food and nutrition discourse.
- Dr Izabela Delabre presented a briefing at the Conference of the UN Convention on Biodiversity in July 2019.
- SSRP co-sponsored a key Side Event on SDG Interactions with the government of Ghana at the July, 2018 High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development at the UN in New York.

More examples are given in Section 2.2 d.2.

### **Plans for impact in next reporting period**

SSRP is planning many activities over the next months to achieve impact from its research results:

- Working with local partners and stakeholders in 15 Global South countries to derive impact from our research, as in the examples in Box 2.
- Organising a major international Virtual Climate Conference on "Aligning the Climate and SDG Agendas" in the run-up to the global Climate Convention Conference of Parties in Glasgow, November, 2021.
- Organising a major international meeting with Wilton Park on "Immediate Actions to Further Multiple SDGs".
- Briefings of key UK government officials; submitting further written and verbal [testimony](#) to Parliamentary Committees,
- Organise major meetings together with the International Science Council, UN, and other major actors to accelerate the use of research results in the SDG process.
- Preparing several Policy Briefs coupled with media events featuring findings from SSRP projects (See Section 6).
- Accelerating impact with small grants from the SSRP Impact Fund. This fund was launched in July, 2019 to provide short-turnaround funds for SSRP researchers to generate additional impact from their research. The Fund is financed by contribution income on successful SSRP grants, and is an example of SSRP policy to quickly recycle income to its researchers.

## Box 2. Examples of local SSRP impact on three continents

### Example 1. Combining health and conservation programmes in New Guinea. Project of Alan Stewart, Jackie Cassell & Jo Middleton and local partners



The 'Surfaces' project focusses on synergies between public health delivery and biodiversity conservation in threatened rainforests in Papua New Guinea. Papua New Guinea's rainforest harbours around 8% of global biodiversity, yet one quarter of its forest has been cleared or degraded, half of this by commercial logging. Local communities lack alternative options for development and a major issue they face is access to decent health services – indeed the country is ranked very low in the SDG health indicator scores (155 out of 188). The project has tested a mobile health clinic approach to build synergies between health delivery and conservation (SDG3: Good Health and Wellbeing and SDG15: Life on Land). It has found that the provision of health services can incentivise communities to protect their forests in preference to taking financial inducements from extractive industries. The project has received a Darwin Initiative grant to scale up this work.

### Example 2. Exploring the interactions between drought, poverty and HIV to fully understand how and why healthcare use can be negatively impacted. Project of Collins Iwuji, Dominic Kniveton, Sonja Ayeb-Karlsson and local partners



7.5 million people in South Africa live with HIV (2019). This project hypothesises that drought increases vulnerability for people living with HIV which creates the difficult trade-offs between healthcare utilization and pursuit of economic sustenance, thereby creating conditions for increased HIV drug resistance. The aim of this project, focusing on the area of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa is to develop interventions that reduce disengagement from care and the need for trade-offs between economic sustenance and health care utilisation. Initial recommendations coming from the project include: providing more effective early warning mechanisms around drought prediction, developing effective plans to improve access to water for communities, and adopting policies to address food insecurity.

### Example 3. Understanding how conflict over environmental justice affects the achievement of the SDGs in Ecuador. Project of M. Menton, M. Peck and local partners



The globalised expansion of capitalism and industrial economy is resulting in an increase and expansion of extractive activities, production of waste, and their related social and environmental impacts that have generated conflict with, and resistance from, communities, indigenous groups and activists. The project set out to understand how environmental justice (EJ) conflicts linked to global commodity chains impact Ecuador's ability to achieve the SDGs. The team's review of the SDGs in light of EJ conflicts and EJ frameworks identified a predominant focus on legal justice and rule-of-law that lacked attention to key dimensions of EJ (distribution, procedure and recognition). The SSRP team is now working with local and national stakeholders to co-produce locally relevant indicators of the SDGs that take into account environmental justice and do not require costly monitoring requirements.

### 3 How does the programme contribute to the aims of Sussex 2025 and the 16 University KPIs?

We believe that the SSRP has become one of the main institutions on campus contributing to the core aims of Sussex 2025. (Details are presented in a separate document called “SSRP Phase II Draft Business Case for Support”.) We are a model “academic activist” organisation having both academic impact and simultaneous engagement in communities throughout the Global South and the UK, and in the international arena.

The goals of SSRP dovetail very closely with the one of the main strategic aims of the University, i.e. to be recognised as a major “Sustainability University”. The objectives of Phase II of SSRP will greatly advance this strategic aim. These objectives are to: (i) through its research, play a leading role in implementing an integrative approach to the SDGs worldwide, (ii) mobilise the international science community to work on the SDGs, and (iii) equip young experts and researchers from around the world with skills for achieving the SDGs. Pursuing these objectives will significantly raise the profile of the University worldwide in sustainability.

SSRP is also a champion of the University’s values of “inclusion” and “collaboration” since nearly all of our research involves strong and diverse partnerships among Sussex schools and departments and with partners in 15 low and medium countries. We strongly support the values of “integrity”, “courage” and “kindness” in our day-to-day working relationships.

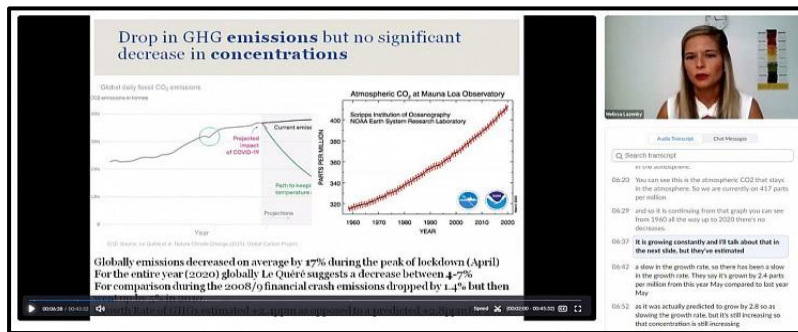
With regards to specific University KPIs:

*Research with impact* – We are pushing the frontiers of multi- and interdisciplinary work and also carrying out “deep interdisciplinary” research, i.e. combining natural and social sciences. We have forged new successful research partnerships across Schools and IDS, and other UK institutions. We are challenging conventional thinking with ideas about integrated implementation of the SDGs, critical transition zones for the SDGs, sustainable global supply chains, and others. We are making significant contributions to KPI’s for citation impact, grant capture.

*Engage for change* – After an effective run time of only two+ years we are already having an impact locally, nationally, and internationally. At the local/community level we are “co-delivering projects on the ground” in communities in New Guinea, Ecuador, Kenya and 12 other LMICs. Nationally, we are engaging continuously with Parliament; we have testified before their committees and been cited verbatim in their reports. Internationally we have represented the scientific community at high level UN events and work with key international organisations. We are now also engaging with the private sector, particularly digital firms, to involve them in our projects and the implementation of the SDGs.

*Building on strengths* – The SSRP is a natural extension of the University’s excellence in development studies, strong contributions to environmental science, and progressive outlook. We provide continuous support to Sussex researchers through our support of bids, seed grant programmes, Fund for Visiting Fellows, Fund for Increased Impact, and many other mechanisms. We are not only engaged abroad but also encourage “pride of place”, with our concept of “Sustainability Observatory Sussex” and our off-campus public events. In Phase II we are looking forward to working with the new Sustainability Manager of Sussex, Samantha Waugh, on various KPI’s such as: achieving a low carbon university, and increasing the pride that staff have to be associated with Sussex.

#### 4 Has the programme encountered issues/challenges in this reporting period? If so, what remedial action has been taken?



Dr. Melissa Lazenby from Geography talking about the impact of the pandemic on climate change as part of the SSRP webinar series on “The Pandemic and Sustainability”

#### Forging on through the pandemic

The pandemic has disrupted SSRP activities, as it has disrupted everything else, especially since most SSRP research is abroad in the Global South. Nevertheless, we have done our best to continue with our research projects, in some cases through local partners, in others by using remote communications.

Apart from continuing with its many projects, the SSRP has also provided an inspiring platform for researchers during these difficult times through its numerous events and activities. During this time, it has:

- Organised an online **SSRP Web Forum** on the “[Pandemic and Sustainability](#)” with insightful contributions from researchers across campus
- Established an ongoing **SSRP Webinar Series** on the “[Pandemic and Sustainability](#)” in which faculty from across campus present their latest thinking on key topics like “[A tale of two crises: The pandemic and climate change](#)” and “[The pandemic and inequality](#)”.
- Continued to stimulate new research collaborations across campus by organising several “**research sandpits**”. These sandpits have catalysed ideas for new research bids, especially for pandemic-related sustainability research.
- Organised a multi-session online **SSRP Research Symposium** featuring very lively discussions on moving forward with sustainability research in times of the pandemic.
- Contributed [SSRP research findings](#) to a new, widely-distributed Parliamentary group report on “[Building Back Better: The SDGs as a roadmap for recovery](#)”. The report cites SSRP research results five times and incorporates three recommendations coming from SSRP.

More information on SSRP activities through the pandemic is given in Section 2.2 d.1.2.

Despite forging on, the work of the SSRP has been impacted by the pandemic. Not being able to travel and working remotely has meant important field trips to conduct research have not been able to happen. Alongside this the funding landscape has changed with requirements for more research outputs and tighter turnarounds with the need for rapid pivots of research. The impact this has had on SSRP projects is some have been delayed in starting, for example SSRP-IDCF projects. Other SSRP projects have received no cost extensions and we have assisted in contract changes for staff so they were able to conduct research remotely.

An additional challenge to the SSRP over the last reporting period was that the staff was not operating at full capacity for five months. The previous SSRP Programme Manager, Laura Craggs left in November 2019, and it was not until March 2020 that the secretariat was again at full capacity. The team only had a chance to work together in person for one month before the lockdown required everyone to work at home.

Due to academics having to prepare a new and more complicated teaching offering for the autumn term, they have not been able to invest as much time in SSRP as usual over the past few months. Despite these factors we have received positive feedback from our community that our consistent outputs and events have provided a guiding focus to help them engage with research during this turbulent time.

## 5 Detail the most significant future opportunities and risks to the success of the programme and mitigation plans

### 5.1 Opportunities

The Pandemic has brought not only human tragedy but also enormous socio-economic impacts. We believe that recovering from these impacts is not enough; that the recovery is an opportunity to move the world forward in a more sustainable direction. SSRP is already contributing in many ways to the public discourse on “building back better” through its Web Forum series on the Pandemic and Sustainability, through its webinars and presentations at national and international meetings. Its work on “Science for the SDGs” has become more relevant than ever as policymakers consider making the SDGs a framework for recovery efforts. An example of SSRP’s increasing influence is the new Parliamentary Group Report on *Building Back Better: The SDGs as a roadmap for recovery* which quotes SSRP findings in several places and adopts some of its recommendations. (See Sec. 2.2). Over the coming months and years there will be increasing opportunities for new first-class sustainability research on the many topics involved with “building back better”.

There is other evidence that sustainability issues are climbing higher on the international agenda. For example, in September, 2019, progress on the Sustainable Development Goals was deemed so important that it had to be addressed at the level of ‘Heads of State’ at a UN Summit. (which was attended by SSRP Director Joseph Alcamo).

Not only is the politics of sustainability rapidly climbing on the international agenda, but support for sustainability research is also rapidly increasing and is likely to continue growing over the coming years. Of particular relevance to the University and SSRP is that the type of sustainability research being called for by donors in the UK, Europe, and internationally, is the type of research carried out by the SSRP – science with a global perspective, yet largely place-based, interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and solution-oriented, with particular emphasis on impact on low- and medium-income countries.

A sign of these opportunities is that within its short operational lifetime the SSRP has been able to mobilise more than **£6.8M in external research income**, doubling the original SDF investment.

An additional opportunity coming up next year for the University and SSRP is the global Climate Convention Conference of Parties (“COP 26”) in Glasgow, November, 2021. Because of the COP, the UK will be a temporary focal point for the world’s concerns about climate change. SSRP hopes to partner with the University and institutions abroad to take advantage of this temporary global stage by organising a major international Virtual Climate Conference on “Aligning the Climate and SDG Agendas”. There is the potential to coordinate this conference with the UK government and UN so that it becomes one of the official high-profile events leading up to the COP.



## 5.2 Risks

Despite SSRP's accomplishments and profile, the funding landscape is very competitive and it must work very hard to maintain its edge. Carrying out SSRP's large programme of activities already stretches staff capacity (see Section 4).

Brexit will make the funding landscape still more competitive, at least in the short run, as large sources of EU funding abruptly dry up. Hopefully this will only be a temporary condition, since the permanent loss of EU research funding would be a major blow to the research community in Sussex and the rest of the UK. The University should do what it can to convince the government to join in a Europe-wide research area as soon as possible so that EU research funds can again flow to Sussex and the UK.

SSRP formally began in 2015/16 so the investment period runs out in formally in February, 2021, although carryover funds are adequate for staff and operational costs up to July 31, 2021, and staff costs up to March, 2022. Nevertheless, the University has to decide soon on a new Phase II five-year period. However, since SSRP has only been staffed up since mid-2017 many projects are only now beginning to yield results and impacts (although as shown in this report, research income, outputs and impacts are already substantial). The risk is that the University does not see the potential of SSRP becoming a world leader in sustainability research and science for the SDGs.

## 6 Detail key actions and planned outputs for the next reporting period (1 August 2020 – 31 July 2021) including key milestones and deliverables, this can cover planned research bids, outreach activities, publication plans etc

Milestone (Provisional. Planning meeting to take place October, 2020)	Planned completion date (chronologically, according to sub-categories)
These milestones are organised according to the three objectives that guide SSRP's daily activities: (i) Building the sustainability research community in Sussex; (ii) Expanding the research pie; and (iii) maximising academic and societal impact.	
<b>(i) Objective: Building the sustainability research community in Sussex</b>	
Disbursement of funds for Fellowship programme (contingent on pandemic situation)	November, 2020
Convening a campus-wide meeting on developing a university sustainability teaching programme and curricula	December, 2020
Mini-symposium of research cluster "Impacts of economic globalization on the SDGs"	Early December 2019
Webinar workshop on "A Dialogue Between the Decolonial and Sustainability Research Communities"	January, 2021
Webinar workshop on "Gaps in Global Environmental Treaties"	February, 2021
Mini-symposium of research cluster "Planetary health and the SDGs"	March, 2021
Mini-symposium of research cluster "Critical transition zones for SDGs"	April, 2021
<b>(ii) Objective: Expanding the research pie</b>	
Comparing different community food partnerships and the effect on local food supply chains., UKRI Covid response	Oct/Nov 2021
Explainable machine learning for the democratisation of conservation and land planning, EPSRC Digital Economy Sustainable Digital Society	Oct 2020

Prepare bids in connection with GCRF and non-GCRF calls from ESRC, NERC, British Academy, others	As opportunities arise. We expect that SSRP-researchers will submit 15+ bids over the next reporting period.
Campaign for obtaining a charity multi-year block grant: Work with Academic Office to contact potential donors	Ongoing
SSRP-IDCF Seed Grant Fund #4 (proposed and under discussion) -- Announcement -- Disbursement of grants	January, 2021 March, 2021
<b>(iii) Objective: Maximising academic and societal impact</b>	
Publish Policy Briefs on: "Trade and Sustainability" (Emily Lydgate), "People, Nature and Large Herbivores in a shared landscape together" (Chris Sandom), "Forecasting for food producers" (Max Martin), "SDGs and Universities: Catalysing Change through Creative Partnerships with Government and Communities" (Chris Gordon) and "Pre-COP26" (Izabela Delabre) - with media coverage.	November, 2020 – February, 2021
Publish other Policy Briefs on nearly completed SSRP projects together with media events	February, 2021 – August, 2021
Upcoming: Financial crisis, poverty and environmental sustainability conference, Bangkok - This international event is contingent on pandemic-related travel restrictions yet to be known. The conference is linked to the SSRP project ' <u>Financial crises and environmental sustainability</u> ' and will focus on the impact of COVID-19 on multidimensional poverty and related feedback loops to other SDGs, with a particular focus on sub-Saharan African countries in extreme poverty.	14-15 December 2020
Re-structuring and re-launch of Communications Strategy (We are reworking our communications strategy to disseminate findings more effectively and to a more varied audience. This includes streamlining and tailoring our key messages to specific audiences & using the most effective format and communication channel to reach people. One of the key priorities is to tell the stories of research in a more accessible way to garner more media interest and increase the reach of our work.)	January 2021
Co-sponsoring a Wilton Park International Roundtable on "Proven Synergies Among the Sustainable Development Goals"	April 2021 Contingent upon external financing
Publication of Special Issue of <i>Sustainability Science</i> journal featuring SSRP research	November 2020
Publication of Special Issue of <i>Land</i> journal edited by SSRP researchers	February, 2021?
Publication of Special Issue of <i>Sustainability</i> journal edited by SSRP researchers	May, 2021
Organising Virtual International Workshop on "Scaling up Findings from Local SDG Research"	July, 2021 Contingent upon external financing
Organising Virtual International Conference on "Climate and the Sustainable Development Goals" (In conjunction with Climate Change Conference of Parties in Glasgow in November, 2021) (under discussion)	Nov. 2021

**7 Financial sustainability:** provide details on discussions to date and agreements reached with regards to how the programme will be financially sustainable once the SDF investment expires

The planned end of SSRP's Phase I investment period is February, 2021, but there have been several developments that have influenced the planning for Phase II.

Last year a Five-Year Plan for SSRP Phase II (2021-2026) was submitted as an addendum to the Annual Report. Based on a decision taken at the last Annual Review Meeting (November 7, 2019) the SSRP has been working with an Ad Hoc Working Group (led by Pro VC for Planning and Resources, Stephen Shute, and including finance and research department colleagues) to further develop this Five-Year Plan. We have now produced a draft Business Case for Support which includes a preliminary budget for a five-year SSRP Phase II. To bring these efforts forward, the Working Group and SSRP were planning to ask for meetings with Heads of Schools to discuss the Business Case and Phase II budget. *However, the pandemic intervened, and this plan has been interrupted.*

As a new plan, we now think it would be appropriate to involve the new Pro VC for Research, Keith Jones, in these issues. The new Pro VC is arriving in October and will be responsible for SSRP and the other strategic research programmes. We suggest that the Pro VC for Research and the Pro VC for Planning and Resources (and perhaps other members of the Working Group) join us in the series of meetings that had been earlier planned with Heads of Schools. The objective of these meetings should be to discuss the Business Case and budget of SSRP Phase II. Considering that the five-year investment period of SSRP runs out very soon, we hope these discussions can take place as soon as possible, at least before the end of this year (2020).

With regards to available funds, the Finance Department informed the Working Group and SSRP that SSRP had underspent its investment budget. This was due to "the re-profiling of expenditure, clarification of detailed commitments, and current assured research contribution." Because of these available funds, on June 2, 2020 Stephen Shute approved an extension of SSRP staff contracts to March, 2022. It is unclear, however, whether the unspent funds are adequate to cover the *operational* costs of the programme up to March, 2022.

As a last point regarding budget, the SSRP submitted an annual budget for fiscal year 2020/21 and this was approved. This budget includes staff and operational costs up to the end of the fiscal year. Hence, SSRP is now operating on a full budget, but only up to July 31, 2021, leaving little time to decide on the future of the SSRP. Again, we hope that discussions can progress quickly on our future.

**8 Detail any decisions required from the Planning and Review Board**

Not decisions, but discussion points:

- Request advice from Review Board: How to motivate more interdisciplinary cooperation on campus?
- Request advice from Review Board: How to align goals of SSRP more closely with the goals of the Schools?
- Request advice from Review Board: In Phase II SSRP plans to get much more engaged in supporting teaching. In what ways can SSRP best support teaching?

- Request advice from Review Board: How can we better support the University in becoming a leading university for sustainability?

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2	Examples of local SSRP impact on three continents

Please return report and attachments to [Debbie Foy D.Foy@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:Debbie.Foy@sussex.ac.uk) by Wednesday  
30<sup>th</sup> September 2020