

# SEI Strategy 2020–24

Knowledge for action



Full version



**Stockholm Environment Institute**

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Cover photo: People walking across U Bein Bridge in the morning, Mandalay, Myanmar

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Stockholm Environment Institute is an international non-profit research institute that tackles environment and development challenges. We connect science to policy and practice to develop solutions for a sustainable future for all. Our work spans climate change, natural resources, water, air, and health, and integrates evidence and perspectives on governance, innovation, business, poverty, gender and social change. Our approach empowers people for change for the long term: research excellence and engagement with partners are at the heart of our efforts to set new agendas, build capacities, and support better decision-making.

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## Preface

Scientists and policymakers agree that what humankind does – or does not do – over the coming five to ten years will define the conditions for sustainable development for decades to come. The world needs bold political decisions, as well as changes in business practices, resource management and consumer behaviour. None of these will come easy, and they face huge barriers – institutional, social, cultural, economic – as well as a lack of robust, relevant and applicable knowledge. We have prepared this strategy for 2020–24 to make us ready and able to make a marked contribution in the years ahead to the changes needed in how human society governs and interacts with the environment.

The first part of the strategy is about who we are and what we stand for, and how we interpret the changing world around us. SEI operates in a fast-changing context, facing massive ongoing shifts in national and international politics, social norms and technologies. Many of these shifts have in recent years made it more difficult to carry out our mission. The rise of nationalism and populism is becoming a barrier to multilateral cooperation. Public distrust in science is on full display around the world. We need to respond and adapt to this new reality. At the same time, we must declare our origins and our identity and values. These include a deep commitment to human rights, to our partnerships, to research excellence, and to independence and integrity in our work.

The second part is about what it is that we are aspiring to change. Drawing on key policy declarations and our own assessment of challenges, we have chosen to target three major areas: reduced climate risk, sustainable resource use and resilient ecosystems, and improved health and well-being. Within each area, the strategy describes specific changes that we will pursue. Some of our efforts build on spheres of work where SEI has a strong legacy and already made a lasting difference, but where challenges remain; others present new opportunities and challenges.

The third part is about how we make change happen. Delivering results requires a clear understanding of what different pathways to impact SEI can effectively pursue. We are now working with an updated theory of change at the organizational level. It describes how we address the lack of access to useable, actionable and relevant knowledge for sustainable development; that is, with excellent research that engages with the right questions and the right partnerships. The knowledge is co-created, and applied and taken up through tools, workshops, scientific publications, training, and networking efforts, and communicated in relevant and innovative formats. This generates outcomes by changing agendas, enhancing capacities, and improving decision-making in different spheres of governance. This way of working is not new for SEI. What is new in this strategy is its articulation as a theory of change, and its use as a framework for our planning, operations, results and follow-up.

The fourth and final part describes the operations behind our delivery – including our people and culture, our organization, and some key processes and policies that guide us. Our operational style puts a premium on effectiveness, trust, accountability, and innovation and learning. We also set ourselves a high bar in terms of ethical practice, codes of conduct and environmental impact, and we are increasing our ambitions for knowledge management, applying a new generation of systems as well as paving the way for open and productive interactions among SEI's people and beyond.

The strategy does not fundamentally change SEI – we remain committed to the notion that enhanced capacities and research-based knowledge remain necessary ingredients for change in relevant institutions and processes. This strategy builds on the 30 years of experience gained since SEI's inception in 1989, and will keep us focused by setting priorities and providing a framework for planning and assessing progress. Through it, SEI will become more effective in supporting change and setting the right conditions for global sustainability, in the 2020s and beyond.



**Måns Nilsson, Executive Director**

# 1. Our origins and who we are today

As part of the strategy process, we have revisited and clarified our mandate, principles and core values. These guide us as we set out to deliver real impact in a changing world over the coming years.

Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) was founded in 1989 and is named after the Stockholm Declaration of 1972 (see box on page 5). We look to this declaration as the origin of our mandate, and we fulfil that mandate through research and engagement.

SEI is a research institute that covers a wide range of knowledge-related activities. Our researchers carry out scientific studies and assessments, produce transdisciplinary knowledge, develop software tools, build networks, engage with policy and decision making, conduct training, and much more.

SEI's mission, which has been in place since the late 1990s, is more relevant than ever and we remain committed to our role as a bridging organization.<sup>1</sup>

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## OUR VISION AND MISSION

**Vision:** A sustainable, prosperous future for all.

**Mission:** To support decision-making and induce change towards sustainable development around the world by providing integrative knowledge that bridges science, policy and practice in the field of environment and development.<sup>2</sup>

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SEI focuses on **environmental dimensions of human development and well-being** and, as set out in our Statutes, aims to contribute to better living conditions around the world, including for poor and vulnerable groups, through better “policies, technologies and related management techniques and strategies for an environmentally sustainable development of society”.

SEI sees that poverty and environment are interconnected and need to be addressed together. People in poverty are usually the most vulnerable to the effects of land-use change, environmental pollution and climate change. And in some contexts, poverty contributes to environmental degradation, because where people lack knowledge, resources and basic services they can over-exploit the local environment on which they depend.

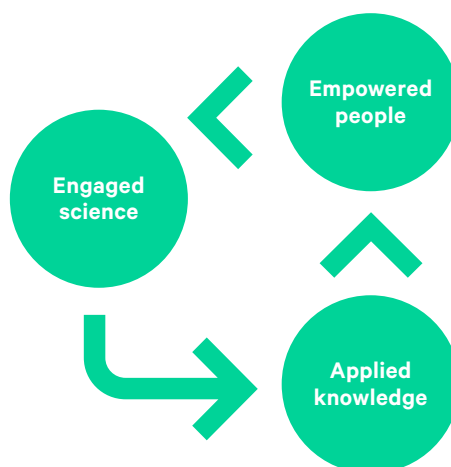
All SEI's work recognizes the connection between development and the environment, and our mandate and focus remain on the environmental dimensions of sustainable development. We are investing to ensure that **gender equality, social equity and poverty** are integrated across our research and engagement.

SEI's knowledge is **based on science**. We produce scientific publications, including peer reviewed articles in high-impact scientific and practice-oriented journals. Our credibility and trustworthiness as an independent partner are central to our identity, and we invest in long-term partnerships with selected universities.

1 The SEI statutes, established by the Swedish Parliament, state that SEI's objective is to “initiate, conduct and disseminate studies and other research, and disseminate knowledge within the field of environment” (§2), and that in these activities SEI “shall co-operate with organizations, public authorities, institutions, companies and individuals worldwide” (§3).

2 SEI's mission, which has been in place since the late 1990s, is more relevant than ever, and our role as a bridging organization remains crucial. We have added the word practice to clarify that we work not only through policy but also engage directly with research and evidence, practitioners and implementation, and with businesses, investors, communities, farmers and households. And it is in this broad sense that we interpret the term policy – to include decision making of non-public actors and organizations. This revision to the mission statement comes from the evolution of SEI's theory of change (see Section 3).

Figure 1 Engaged science, applied knowledge, empowered people



We collect data through original applied research, conduct synthesis and assessment, and analyse evidence to solve problems and address policy agendas, without pre-set positions. The issues we address tend to be complex, with difficult trade-offs that need systematic and balanced consideration. In doing so we take a **systems perspective** – we focus on the whole picture and combine complementary skill sets from different disciplines.

SEI has a **trust-based** organizational culture, and our people breathe life into and carry out our mission. We put high levels of confidence in our colleagues around the world, which enables SEI researchers to innovate, take initiative, and engage with key arenas of decision making.

SEI is **innovative** and adaptive in order to respond to new challenges. We cross-fertilize research areas and competences to develop new tools and approaches. Creative and networked researchers develop our research agenda, and we set up structures (“innovative spaces”) to enable and incentivize innovation and connect them to our project delivery model.

SEI is **responsive**. Knowledge on its own is rarely enough to induce change; solutions need to be grounded in and responsive to context. Our Headquarters and centres (see Section 1.2) enable us to engage in regional, national and local policy processes where there is potential for change, and to connect these to global policy agendas (see Section 3.3). Nearly all our projects either work with decision makers in a very involved way or supply them with targeted and relevant knowledge derived from projects. We seek to take advantage of windows of opportunity and ensure that insights can be applied in practice by decision makers, whether in regional assemblies, government offices, or rural households and communities

SEI is **solution-oriented** and designs its projects to take advantage of opportunities to address and mitigate challenges and empower the right actors. We recognize that visions of “global transformations” must be broken down into meaningful and actionable parts, focusing on concrete levers for change in the here and now, and at the appropriate levels of decision making.

SEI projects are carried out in **partnership** with other organizations. Through our centres spread across five continents (see Section 1.2) we build long-term relationships with policymakers and other stakeholders and establish global knowledge networks. We provide knowledge that helps connect the dots between actors in different spheres who do not normally interact. We develop knowledge networks and partners’ capacity to respond to challenges, reducing their vulnerability and assisting them with context-specific knowledge that meets their needs. Our focus is on

building trust, empowerment, and working with partners to co-create knowledge – an approach that is more likely to result in ownership of results and sustained action.

We work with a range of partner groups, described below.

**Institutional funders, project funders, and clients.** Our funders highlight new agendas and policy issues, provide financial support, and allow us to road-test ideas and get feedback. We partner with them by identifying knowledge frontiers, providing scientific approaches to their problems, and delivering outputs and results that are accessible and actionable. Often, we have a close and ongoing dialogue with these partners, but we also operate at arm's length, such as when we seek competitive research grants to develop scientific groundwork for engagement with policy and practice.

**Institutes, think tanks, and academia.** We partner with other knowledge-providers for multiple reasons: to access expertise, to ensure our research is firmly grounded by consulting with local and regional research partners, and to create alliances for achieving greater impact on policy and practice. Long-term university partners include the University of los Andes, Chulalongkorn University, KTH Royal Institute of Technology, the University of Nairobi, Stockholm University, Tufts University and the University of York. SEI contributes to several communities of practice, including the scientific community, through conferences, publications and peer review; communities of science-policy interaction, through participating in assessments; and the think tank community, through actionable policy ideas and advice.

**Beneficiaries in public policy, business, planning, civil society, and communities.** We partner with decision makers, officers and analysts that are the intended users of and audiences for our work. Increasingly, these actors are not just target audiences at the end of a research activity or stakeholders that we consult, but are instead engaged right from the outset, often as project partners (see Section 3 on our theory of change). They partner with us to access new knowledge and solutions supported by research evidence, and to apply our tools and disseminate our knowledge.

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## THE STOCKHOLM DECLARATION

The creation of the Stockholm Environment Institute in 1989, and its name, are derived from the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972, which culminated in the Stockholm Declaration. This was the first UN conference on the connections between human development and the environment, and it gave birth to the concept of global environmental co-operation.

The principles set out in the Stockholm Declaration remain relevant 50 years later, and also reappear, rather consistently, in later multilateral agreements. As SEI itself moves into its fourth decade, this is a moment to reflect on the Declaration, to understand our origins, how far we have come, and how much more remains to be done. Many of its principles remain urgent. These include human rights and well-being, safeguarding natural resources for present and future generations, maintaining renewable resources, conservation, pollution, disaster risk, financial and technological transfer, urbanization, scientific research, international cooperation, and integrated development policy and planning. The UN Conference on the Human Environment also established that alleviating poverty and protecting the environment are inextricably linked, as articulated by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in her seminal speech in the plenary session on 14 June 1972.

These principles have since been repeated, updated and mainstreamed in landmark global forums such as the Brundtland Commission in 1987, the Rio Summit in 1992 and more recently in the articulation of the 2030 Agenda in 2015. They are a key foundation and frame of reference for SEI's conception of sustainable development.

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## 1.1 The world around us

In 2015, when SEI's previous strategy was put in motion, sustainable development was at the centre of the international policy agenda and significant achievements were made in establishing the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and the Sendai Framework.

In the years since, progress on sustainable development has arguably become more difficult at the international level. National self-interest has become a blatant driver in international negotiations. Authoritarian regimes and populism are gaining ground in both lower and higher-income countries. Distrust in science has become a major issue, and the negative trend is being amplified by populist world leaders. These trends are putting the international collaborative system at risk and triggering a new landscape of risk and risk amplifiers. Our multilateral systems are having difficulty adapting to this new world order, which includes rapid shifts in power relations between the large countries. Emerging economies such as China and India continue to grow in importance in geopolitical and environmental terms, and in terms of technology leadership. The European Union aspires to a leadership role but struggles to reach unanimous support for this internally.

Meanwhile, global greenhouse gas emissions have kept rising. The IPCC's report Global Warming of 1.5°C highlighted the likelihood of global warming reaching 1.5°C – and the irreversible impacts that could occur with it. It also emphasized how much more significant the impacts would be if warming reaches 2°C.

We are already experiencing a warming world, and it is clear we need to prepare for even more serious impacts. And other environmental challenges have also become more severe, such as the pollution of the ocean and deforestation, and a range of problems connected with rapid urbanization. These developments shape this strategy and its areas of impact.

### Growing momentum

At the same time, there is a growing momentum for urgent climate action, not least in parts of the private sector and civil society. There are clear signs of a generational norm shift through social mobilization and youth engagement. There is also increasing buy-in for the 2030 Agenda, solutions to environmental problems are appearing across all sectors, an energy transition is underway, and, in many places, there is progress on reducing poverty.

SEI will continue to play an active role in defining – and defending – the norms, rules and institutions that underpin global sustainable development, and with the universal values that they are built upon – of human rights, non-discrimination, justice, freedom of expression and equality, and recognition of inherent human dignity. These institutions were established not only for sustainable development but also to safeguard against the kind of military, political or economic powerplays that the past few years have witnessed. And we will continue to provide knowledge to support these institutions as they evolve and adopt new agendas. Meanwhile, a deeper engagement with partners on security issues is key to addressing how sustainable development affects – and is affected by – the new geopolitics.

### Quality, integrity and independence

The provision of unbiased evidence and analysis to policymakers and other key target groups is more important than ever and underscores the need for SEI to safeguard and uphold its quality, integrity and independence. It requires openness to tackle growing mistrust in science. We will continue to explore ways to make our research even more accessible, relevant and easy to use for our audiences and partners. Beyond that, we will review how we can build on open science concepts to further enhance our participatory and co-creative approaches and models for engagement, and support efforts in lower income countries to develop research capacity.



### Knowledge revolution

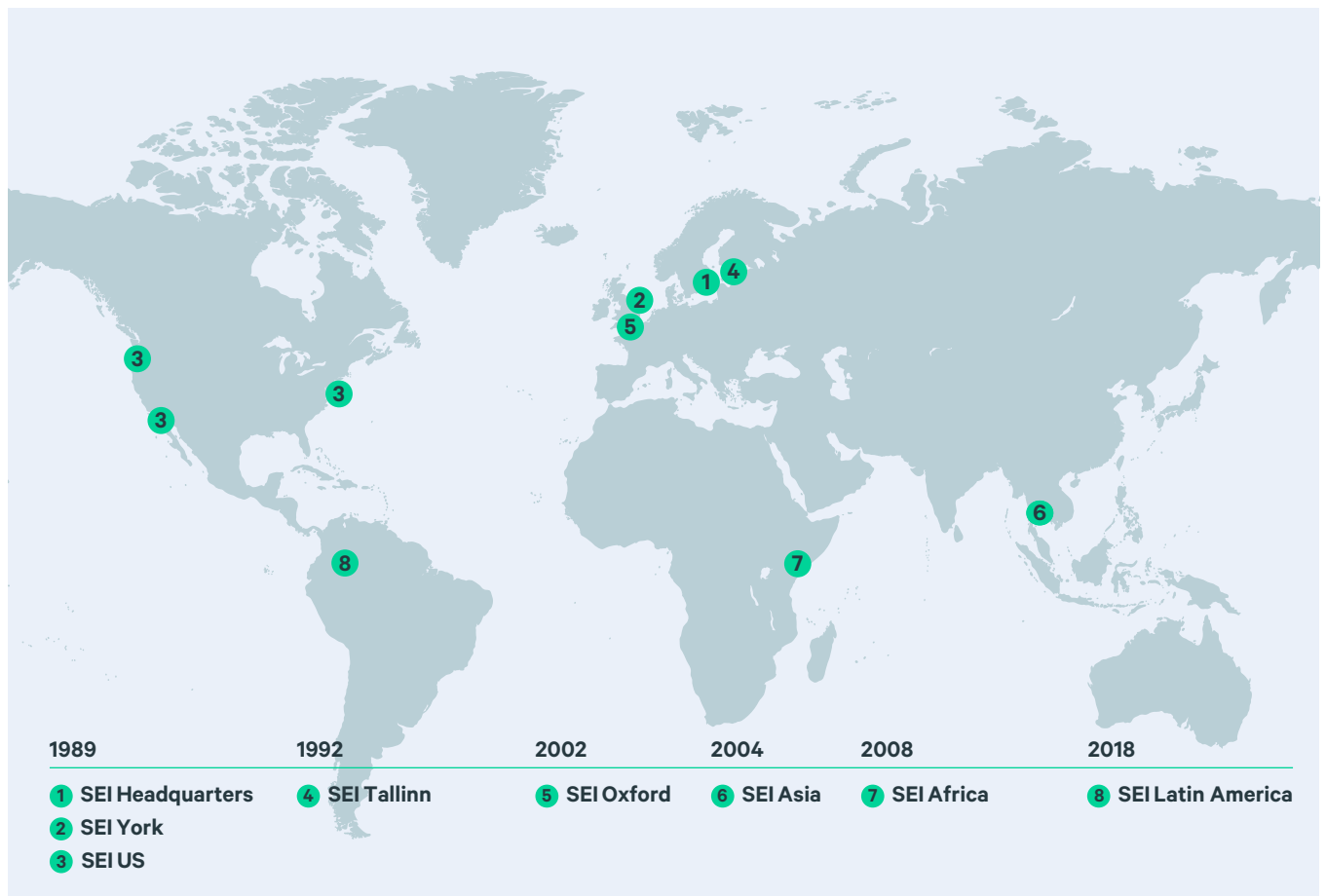
In parallel, there is an ongoing revolution in the globalization of knowledge. New advances in communications technology mean we can now reach audiences rapidly and with precision, but these advances are also shaping politics, political discourse and decision making. Data science and technologies are also pushing the fast-moving scientific frontier for harnessing online data for research purposes. This creates new risks and opportunities for sustainable development but may also widen the gap in the pace of development between those at the forefront of digital technology and those that lack such capacity. In response, it's vital that we continue to build expertise in data science and data-driven methods and explore collaboration with holders of big data, and invest further in digital, interactive communications. Through, for example, our Trase.earth platform and work on systematic reviews, we have begun to unlock the potential of data science for sustainability.

These and other megatrends will shape the conditions for action and decision-making for sustainable development. With innovation, responsiveness and dynamic colleagues, SEI can be confident of adapting to a changing world.

### 1.2 Our centres

SEI's distributed structure captures much of what makes SEI effective and is a founding element of our delivery model and identity. Our centres ground us in local realities, ensure that we are responding to the right agendas, and create opportunities for partnerships and long-term engagement. We aim to add value to regional research, policy and practice, including by connecting to the worldwide research community and conducting comparative research

Figure 2 Our centres



between regions. We recruit staff with deep expertise in the regions where our centres are based and contribute actively to local and regional capacity development.

The centres are located on five continents, in Latin America, East Africa, North America (US), Western and Central-Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia. This unique centre structure also enables North-South, South-South and South-North learning. Crucially, the work of the centres builds on and connects to SEI's expertise globally.

Through the centres we add value to regional policy and practice, for example by connecting it to global processes and conducting comparative research between regions. SEI centres have agreements with universities in host countries and cities (see Section 1). These partnerships provide access to a wider global knowledge community, which we draw on to cover the breadth of our agenda.

SEI's research agendas in different regions start from our universal impact areas described in Section 2 of this strategy, but activities are also tailored to specific regional sustainability challenges. These are articulated in the centres' strategic plans and annual work plans.

While our centres act as regional anchors, SEI is active across all the main continents of the world. Where we work is determined by the challenges faced, the partnerships that are viable, the demand for our work, and what added value SEI can bring.

## 2. Working for impact in 2020–24

The world’s major sustainable development challenges have been articulated – quite consistently over time – in the Stockholm Declaration of 1972, the Brundtland Report of 1987, the Rio Declaration of 1992 and the 2030 Agenda of 2015. Drawing on these declarations and others, and on our key strengths as an institute and our assessment of challenges and opportunities for progress over the coming years, we have chosen to focus on three areas that are of ongoing and crucial importance where we believe we can make a significant impact. These are:

- reduced climate risk
- sustainable resource use and resilient ecosystems, and
- improved health and well-being.

This section describes these impact areas and sets out goals for each.

**Figure 3** Together, our three impact areas contribute to all of the Sustainable Development Goals. This diagram shows which of our impact areas are linked to which SDGs.



The goals are organizational and apply to all research and engagement at SEI. They will define and guide our research agenda, different parts of which will be addressed by different SEI centres, and act as yardsticks for monitoring results, and evaluation and learning. At the same time, the impact areas and goals are strongly linked in that progress on one can impact on the progress of many others. We will work to identify synergies for win-win outcomes, but also remain clear-eyed and honest about difficult trade-offs.

All three impact areas represent universal challenges. However, these challenges manifest in different ways in higher and lower-income countries and regions, and all have intertwined environmental, social and economic dimensions. We recognize that gender, poverty and human rights issues are key to progress, and our dedicated Gender Equality, Social Equity, and Poverty Programme will mainstream these issues in our research (see Section 3.3).

## 2.1 Reduced climate risk

Tackling climate change is critical, given the decadal timeframe available to limit warming to agreed targets. It will involve large-scale and rapid mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions and decarbonizing our economies while safeguarding carbon sinks. Equally important, it involves adapting to climate impacts and managing loss and damage. Climate action is also necessary to reduce the risk of conflict and enhance human security.

Below are our priorities for delivering a safer climate for all.

### Priorities for change

#### 1. Government plans for low-carbon pathways with multiple benefits

We will support governments in developing effective national climate plans (i.e. Nationally Determined Contributions, or NDCs) and work toward joined up action in the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC). We will contribute to long-term climate and energy strategies that embed the SDGs by boosting use and uptake of our Long-Range Energy Assessment and Planning (LEAP) model and building a platform for empowering integrated climate and sustainability planning. This work will include assessing and realizing local co-benefits between climate action and air quality, health, agricultural production, and forests. The Gridless Solutions Initiative will explore what role small-scale energy technologies can play, under what conditions, in an energy transition. Together with national government planners and non-state actors we will co-design research and tools for promoting policy coherence between NDCs and SDG implementation.

#### 2. Strengthened decision making on climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction

We will develop state-of-the-art knowledge management on climate change adaptation, for example through our weADAPT platform, drawing on technological advances and cognitive science. We will build knowledge around transnational climate risk and impacts linked to global processes such as trade, investment and migration, and support planning for adaptation, including through National Adaptation Plans (NAPs). We will show how to better integrate disaster risk reduction with development, and how to pursue equitable resilience. Effective climate services will be increasingly important for making adaptation decisions: because providers and users of climate data need to work together, we will provide guidance on how to co-design and co-develop climate services.

#### 3. Innovation and upscaled investment for industrial transitions

To tackle climate change, it is crucial to increase the knowledge base on, and momentum for, industrial sustainable transitions in energy-intensive industries. SEI has co-designed and piloted efforts in the steel, forestry and mining sectors, and will expand this work to new sectors and countries to enable them take strategic decisions for long-term sustainable development. We will engage with the finance industry to help shift investment patterns by providing

system-level independent analysis. We will deepen our partnership with the private sector on creating societal value, and work with international climate finance institutions to analyse how the generation, delivery and use of finance for investments in mitigation and adaptation can become more effective.

#### 4. **Transitions from fossil energy that address inequality, poverty and political economy**

We will support governments and other actors in transitions away from fossil fuel dependence by providing evidence and convening dialogues through our Tackling Carbon Lock-In Initiative. Shifting to low-carbon pathways also involves shifting away from fossil fuels and carbon-intensive production and consumption practices. Gender equality, social equity, poverty and prosperity will be an integrated part of our research and engagement to ensure that transitions are just and sustainable. This means recognizing context-specific challenges and opportunities in low-income, higher income and emerging economies, and international political dimensions.

#### 5. **More effective international cooperation on climate change**

We will support the evolution of international climate processes and institutions, such as the UNFCCC, and bring important perspectives to the table that are often otherwise missing. Progress on cooperation also depends on willingness among national governments as well as sub-national actors, businesses and civil society. So, through transparent analysis of effort-sharing we will contribute to more effective and equitable climate policy frameworks. This includes analysing the politics around climate finance and how to make financial flows more transparent, as well as the links between climate governance and international trade, and helping to monitor how climate plans, policies and programmes are implemented. Climate change is expected to multiply conflict and security risks around the world, and to address these we will analyse drivers and outcomes of geopolitical change. With an eye to the future, we will contribute to international scientific efforts on scenario-building, including IPCC scenarios, SDG interactions and low emissions development strategies.

## 2.2 Sustainable resource use and resilient ecosystems

Natural resources are being consumed at faster and more unsustainable rates, and the benefits derived from them, and from biodiversity and ecosystems, are distributed unequally, within and between countries. SEI will support more sustainable resource use and resilient ecosystems through its expertise in water management, biodiversity, bioeconomy, agriculture, natural resource governance, supply chain management and waste management. Our partnerships span international organizations (e.g. UNEP, UNCTAD, IEA, FAO, and the donor community), national and regional planning authorities, and the private sector (e.g. voluntary initiatives, standardization bodies, and companies).

### Priorities for change

#### 1. **Effective bioeconomy strategies in national and regional policy and planning**

We will support bio-based economic development that is sustainable, and which creates jobs, improves livelihoods and helps innovative businesses. We will assess various uses of bioresources, including for food, feed, fuel, fibre and green chemicals, and how their use can be optimized and contribute to national and regional policy goals. With our Bioeconomy Pathways initiative, we aim to enable cooperation and innovation in policy on bioresources in both low and high-income countries, for example in terms of resource use across borders, and better management of residues through circular models of use and reuse. The work will be informed by poverty, gender, rights-based and sustainability perspectives, to appreciate challenges and opportunities at both local and global scales.

#### 2. **Water resource management that is ecosystem-based and holistic**

We will aim to apply a holistic long-term perspective among water management authorities, building on SEI's Water Evaluation and Planning System and Water Beyond Boundaries

initiative. We will address water pollution, water efficiency, biodiversity, and inequalities among water users and stakeholders, and assess how these factors affect how water is allocated in river basins. We will support local government in framing new policies and incentives, such as public procurement policies, that stimulate sustainable use of water. Our regional networks, such as SUMERNET, will continue to provide insights on biodiversity mainstreaming, climate variation, sustainable resource use, and community-led ecosystem management for water resource planners.

- 3. Commodity sourcing strategies and standards that address deforestation and biodiversity**

Our Trase platform is a tool that comprehensively maps supply chains for key commodities from entire countries and regions, and the data is provided at scale. Adding new commodities and regions to Trase will provide further knowledge and transparency on agricultural commodity supply chains from source regions associated with deforestation and biodiversity risk. Using insights from Trase and other supply chain analysis techniques (e.g. the SEI IOTA multi-regional input-output modelling framework) we will support decision-makers in policy and business across supply chains – and the broader economies and systems to which they are linked – to make decisions that can help reverse negative trends, for example by adjusting sourcing, consumption levels and environmental standards in pre-competitive and public-private collaborations. Our work will contribute to delivering the Aichi Biodiversity Targets in key jurisdictions and form a major component of international research activity in the UK Research and Innovation Global Challenges Research Fund (UKRI GCRF) Trade, Development and the Environment Hub.
- 4. More productive, resilient and sustainable practices in the agricultural sector**

We will work towards more sustainable and prosperous agricultural and food systems, for example through analysis of agricultural livelihoods and using behavioural science to design effective interventions for rural development and more equitable and sustainable agri-food products, taking into account climate change as well as biodiversity. To support climate resilience in agriculture, we will draw on our work on climate services and water resource management. We will further develop our niche as a knowledge broker and connect more strongly to key decision-makers, for example through the Swedish International Agricultural Network Initiative (SIANI).
- 5. More effective governance of the ocean**

The ocean has not had its own substantial research programme in the past at SEI. But because of the critical role oceans play in sustainability, we plan to expand our contribution in this area. Our aim is to build on our experience in international environmental governance to help resolve the mounting challenges in the ocean and the marine environment – in particular, pollution from chemicals, nutrients and plastics; blue economic development for coastal ecosystems and livelihoods; and climate-induced disaster risk. We will assess and support solutions for mitigating challenges, and engage with international policy as well as transferring knowledge, expertise and policy lessons among the regional seas and coastal areas where SEI has a presence, such as the Baltic Sea and South China Sea.
- 6. Resource rights given greater priority in government and private-sector decision-making**

We will work to strengthen resource rights across regions and provide evidence on this issue for use in government decision-making and corporate sustainability reporting. Unequal access to land and resources is aggravated when resource rights are missing, unclear, or violated, and we will build on our long-standing engagement with, for example, Sámi communities, Arctic communities, and communities in Southeast Asia. A key issue in resource rights is addressing socially determined differences in rights within communities, such as gender and social status.

## 2.3 Improved health and well-being

The connection between environmental change and health has long been established, with known links, for example, between air pollution and respiratory disease, and poor sanitation and waterborne disease. But newer research suggests much deeper and more complex impacts, including on maternal health and neuropsychiatric health. As global warming and change accelerates, impacts are expected to intensify or bring about new challenges. At the same time, the strong connections between health and other priorities in the 2030 Agenda offer opportunities for policy coherence.

We also focus on the links between environment and well-being, taking in mental health and stress, safety, life satisfaction and happiness. While our research in this area has in the past focused on high-income country contexts, we are expanding our focus to well-being in low- and middle-income countries, including in rapidly growing cities.

### Priorities for change

#### 1. Enhanced air quality strategies in low- and middle-income countries

We will support solutions to air pollution from the city to the regional scale, and work closely with the Climate and Clean Air Coalition to develop evidence and tools for governments to implement strategies that can at the same time mitigate climate change and reduce air pollution, including through the LEAP-IBC tool. We will develop effective and participatory approaches to monitoring urban air quality, building on citizen science methods. There are many technical, financial, political and social barriers to expanding access to reliable, modern energy, and we aim to help governments and development partners to overcome these. We will also use behavioural methods and service design to increase uptake of clean technologies and practices, with a focus on sanitation and indoor air pollution.

#### 2. Sanitation solutions that are sustainable, healthy and productive are widely scaled up

We will work to better understand the connections between inadequate access to WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) services and environmental health risks, such as poor management of solid waste. We will develop tools which evaluate the potential to recover resources from urban waste streams and promote frameworks for combined hygiene and better health, reuse of resources in sanitation waste, and protection of water resources. Our Gridless Solutions Initiative will analyse the potential of on-site sanitation solutions. Work on poverty, gender and inequality in sanitation will be central, including through the Empowerment in WASH Index, for measuring outcomes.

#### 3. City planning that improves well-being and environmental health

Our research will provide knowledge on how to increase well-being and reduce stress in cities, particularly in deprived areas, and how healthy environments support better outcomes for people. The City Health and Well-being Initiative will work in higher and lower-income countries on environmental health issues connected to city planning, including mobility and transport, green space, and nature-based solutions. We will produce evidence that can help improve management of urban systems linked to business, infrastructure and healthcare. A suite of mixed methods and tools, including creative engagement, participatory environmental monitoring, co-designed citizen science and links to urban modelling, will enable greater inclusion of communities in urban planning, helping planners to better understand the implications of their decision-making for the environment and social justice.

#### 4. Safer, more effective waste management and circular systems

We will carry out environmental and economic assessments of waste management systems and help develop and evaluate regulatory and economic instruments for better waste management. Our existing collaborations with, for example, the food and textile industries, as well as the public sector, will be built on to develop new approaches towards circular systems and resource recovery. We will explore novel methods for increasing awareness about waste and for changing people's behaviour toward reducing it.

**5. Health and well-being integrated into planning for disasters, migration and displacement**

Our research will recognize individual and societal responses to more frequent quick-onset climate-induced disasters as well as slow-onset environmental change. We will examine consequences of disasters for particularly vulnerable groups, such as disabled people, and inform humanitarian response strategies through new research on the social, cultural and environmental dimensions of forced displacement.

**6. Shifts to more sustainable lifestyles and consumption**

We will develop knowledge about consumption patterns that can be used to encourage a shift towards more sustainable lifestyles and behaviours among consumers and local and national governments. Using different tools, we will measure the relationship between consumption and climate emissions and resource use, grounded in scientific work on input-output analysis. Assessment of the role of trade in driving environmental and social change at national scales will be a priority, and we will work with governments, business and civil society to develop projects and policies for sustainable lifestyles, in particular by drawing on international networks convened under the 10YFP (10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns) and the Good Life Goals.



### 3. Pathways to impact

SEI's impact is sometimes direct and clear – such as when a study reveals game-changing findings, or when researchers build a model or tool that a government uses to make policy. At other times our impact is long-term, time lagged and diffuse. Our work can be among many influences that result in an impact, which can make influence difficult to measure. Improvements in governance, changed norms and behaviour, and technological innovation are all built on the numerous and sustained efforts of many actors.

SEI's theory of change focuses on outcomes. We plan, implement, and follow-up on three types of outcome: changing agendas, enhancing capacities and improving decisions. We also work with a clear and traceable pathway to impact that elaborates the type and significance of SEI's contribution.

We design our projects and initiatives through the lens of this overall theory to articulate an intended pathway and outcome, including how planned activities and outputs build up toward an outcome. This allows us to more easily monitor progress, report results, and learn from our activities.

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#### THE KNOWLEDGE PROBLEM

While substantial knowledge and evidence on critical sustainability issues – such as climate change, ecosystem degradation or poverty – certainly exists, all too often it is fragmented, inaccessible, not useable or applicable to decision making, or altogether unavailable. And often, the transfer of knowledge is not effective. One part of this challenge is the lack of effective knowledge approaches and tools; another can be a lack of legitimacy or lack of capacity among users. Knowledge may also be ignored as a result of political interests and power inequalities. The current trends for discrediting expertise and ignoring facts is a compounding factor.

Such problems are partially to blame for why progress towards national and international goals often falls short. At the same time, we recognize that relations among knowledge, policy, politics and action are complex for multiple, and often wholly legitimate, reasons.

SEI works to address and overcome these problems by developing and co-creating knowledge and supplying syntheses, processes, tools and approaches that enable people to adopt and apply it.

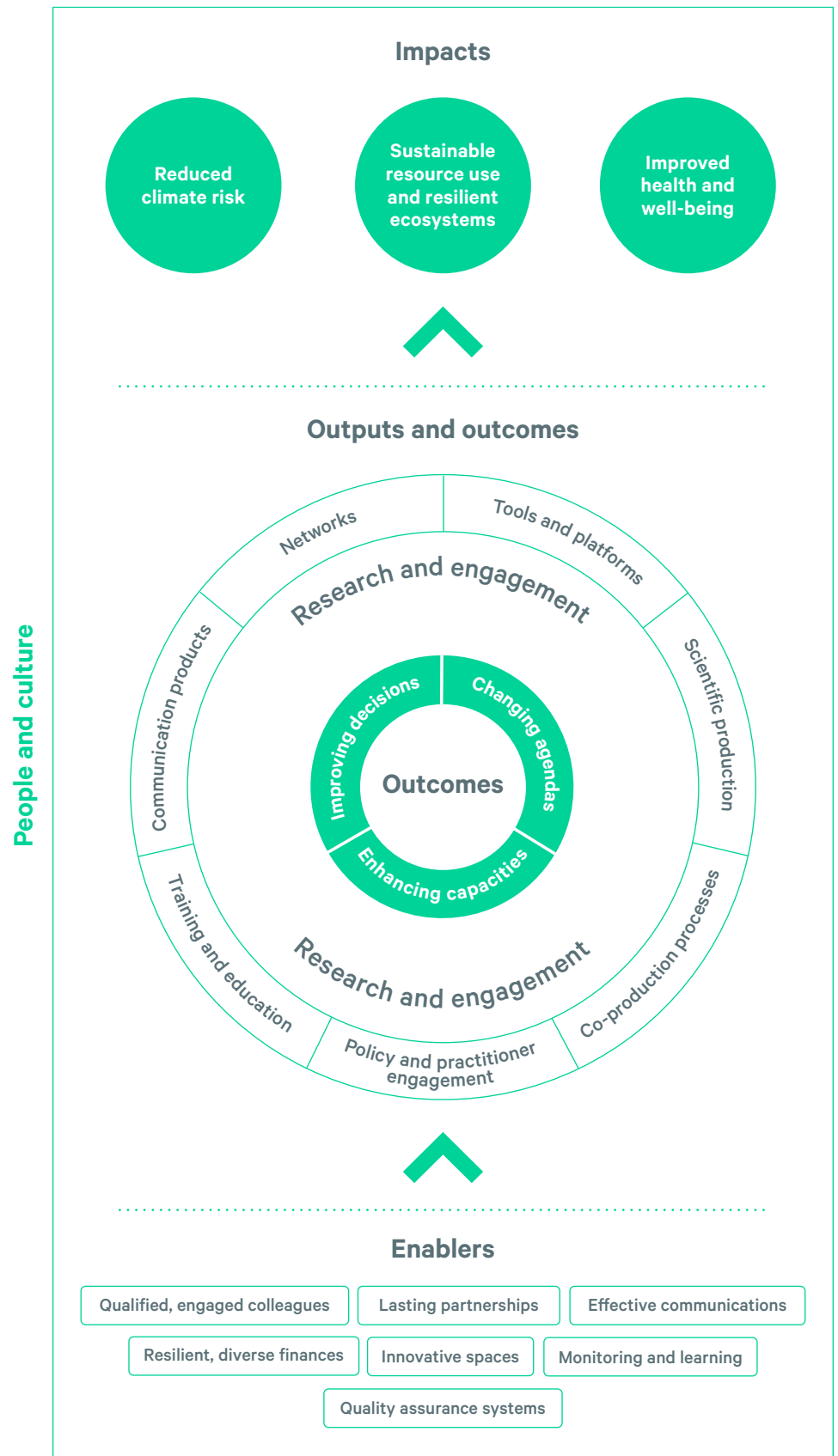
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#### 3.1 Outcomes

SEI works to reduce climate risk, promote sustainable resource use and resilient ecosystems, and improve health and well-being through three main types of outcome:

- **Changing agendas:** where SEI's work results in changes in formal and informal policy agendas and international agreements or treaties, and increases awareness and influences attitudes, perceptions and norms at different levels.
- **Enhancing capacities:** where SEI's work results in strengthened organizational capacity (e.g. to carry out planning and analysis), empowered stakeholders, new networks and coalitions, strengthened institutions, as well as improved, more holistic and inclusive decision-making or planning processes for different actors at different levels.
- **Improving decisions:** where SEI's work supports or changes decisions, decision-making processes, practices, strategies and planning among actors in public policy, finance, business, and resource management.

Figure 4 Our theory of change sets out a clear and traceable pathway to impact.



Our work leads to changes in action and practice – outcomes – that drive progress in development, for example in government spending (e.g. to support rural renewable electrification, or charging stations for electric vehicles); in household or individual behaviour and choice (e.g. consumption, travel behaviour, lifestyle choices); in organizational practices and routines (e.g. procurement or purchasing, investments, finance allocation); building of new firms, products or production chains (e.g. the start of a new company, a pilot plant, a clean technology) or on-the-ground implementation of a policy or development plan (e.g. dissemination and use of new cookstove technologies, or the application of climate-resilient planning).

### 3.2 Research and engagement

SEI's research and engagement supply and apply contextualized, useable knowledge to – and with – a wide range of partners (see list below).

Investigation, interpretation and deepening our understanding of complex problems is at the core of our approach. Our projects typically produce integrated knowledge that is decision-oriented and tailored to the context and needs of users.

The knowledge we generate is anchored in **scientific research** within many different disciplines and might involve a specific output (such as a publication, a finding, a recommendation) to be taken forward in a decision-making context. We often build engagement into research, through methods such as citizen science or participatory scenario development, co-production processes and workshops and dialogues of different types, as well as through tools and platforms that users can work with independently. We see engagement with policy and practice as an activity in its own right. To empower stakeholders, we often engage in or build networks and carry out training.

Uptake of knowledge requires different formats depending on context and audience – for example scientific and other publications, digital channels and platforms, and workshops and meetings of different types. We complement our tools and research outputs with narratives and visualizations, which make results come alive and enable interactive testing, and scientific synthesis, to help stakeholders navigate complex issues and get an overview of available knowledge at critical decision points.

There are many pathways to achieving outcomes, and many partners that enact them. We engage with a broad range of partners who are important change agents for sustainable development and expect to broaden it further. While public policy at international and national levels is key, businesses, including financial services, are also increasingly preparing for and investing in sustainable solutions, technologies and business models.

Our partners span all levels of governance, from global level decision-making to national, subnational and household levels. They include:

- international institutions and convention bodies
- public policymakers, analysts and civil servants
- experts and researchers in think tanks and academia
- business leaders and strategists
- local and regional planners
- community organizations and other civil society organizations, and
- households.

### 3.3 Strategic focus in 2020–24

#### SEI tools

SEI develops tools to support partners, decision-makers, practitioners and other stakeholders to better understand issues and make more informed decisions. These tools comprise various desktop or web-based data systems that create, integrate, and disseminate knowledge across a range of sustainable development topics. We see such tools as indispensable for empowering people to make their own decisions.

That's why users are at the centre of our approach: we strive to understand their needs and design and tailor the tools to meet them, as well as provide training to ensure users can confidently and effectively use them. Our tools portfolio enables users to perform their own analyses, answer policy questions, advocate for equitable treatment, and more. We combine tool delivery with training, workshops, and other capacity building activities, which provide opportunities for knowledge exchange, discussion and learning among stakeholders.

SEI tools present information that would otherwise be unseen, simulate scenarios, and help build stronger networks within and between groups of actors. They can also provide common ground for actors to reach an understanding around an issue and work together. Our tools fall into five different categories, each serving decision makers and practitioners at different levels of governance and practice. These categories are:

- decision support tools
- modelling and simulation tools
- heuristic and interactive tools
- stakeholder-driven process and guidance tools, and
- collaborative data platforms.

Ensuring our tools are widely accessible is also central to our approach: they can often be used with little or no direct engagement with the Institute. This is a key reason for their far-reaching impact.

During the strategy period, an important focus will be to bring complementary tools together to provide holistic solutions for users, and to scale and tailor others to bring them to new audiences. Drawing on new advances in data science, we will also invest in and develop new tools to address sustainable development challenges and decision problems at different scales.

To further develop our tools, we will:

- Improve knowledge management and build competence by developing tool descriptions and training materials.
- Leverage adequate funding throughout the tool development life cycle (design, prototyping, deployment, maintenance, support and retirement) including through licensing solutions.
- Make our tools open access and free-of-charge for users in developing countries.
- Assure quality through peer review and software quality management.
- Enhance follow up and monitoring on tool usage, user experience and impact.
- Improve design and usability.
- Further invest in capacity-building for tool users (e.g. workshops and training).

### SEI Initiatives, 2020–24

SEI Initiatives are programmatic hubs of scientific research, policy engagement and capacity development that mobilize researchers and expertise from across the Institute. They do not represent the full repertoire of SEI work, but issues where we think we can make unique integrative contributions.

With the initiatives, we strive for innovative and high-quality science that effectively and practically supports changes in agendas, capacities and decisions for sustainable development that are of universal relevance, from low- to high-income countries. They build on legacy strengths of the Institute. The following initiatives will be up and running in 2020.

**Gender Equality, Social Equity and Poverty.** Gender, poverty and various forms of inequality – in assets, voice, access and knowledge – are both drivers of and outcomes of environmental change, and as such are central to SEI's work. We will embed these issues in our research, policy engagement and portfolio of tools. Through new research, we will examine conditions for disadvantaged groups at the nexus of gender inequality, poverty and environmental problems, and identify their cross-scale drivers.

**Bioeconomy Pathways.** As the world moves from a fossil-fuel based economy to a bioeconomy, there is a need for new knowledge on how to govern this transition. This initiative carries out assessments, case studies and science-based policy dialogues in Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America to advance emerging bioeconomy strategies. It helps to develop value-added products, processes, and value chains based on bioresources that will contribute to reducing fossil fuel dependence and poverty, as well as support rural development.

**Water Beyond Boundaries.** The current water management paradigm is falling short in efforts to ensure enough water for people, cities, agriculture and ecosystems. This initiative aims to reorient the water agenda and introduce three new pillars – on water teleconnections, on ecosystem functions, and on stakeholder participation – to expand and develop current approaches to water management so that it is more comprehensive, efficient and equitable. The new approach will be developed and tested in in, for example, California, Colombia and the Mekong Basin.

**City Health and Well-being.** Rapid urbanization presents growing challenges to creating healthy, liveable, sustainable and equitable cities. This initiative investigates how rapidly growing cities are affecting the well-being of residents, and how this interacts with the overall health of city systems. It works in partnership with stakeholders in two case study cities – Udon Thani in Thailand and Nakuru in Kenya – using experiences and methods from long-standing work in Europe. We co-create new knowledge through participatory mapping and surveys with local citizens and decision-makers – knowledge that will underpin informed choices for improving the urban environment and which can also be applied in other rapidly changing cities around the world. Insights from work will be scaled up to national and international levels.

**Integrated Climate and Development Planning.** While it is broadly understood that the intertwined objectives of the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) require integrated planning responses, countries are struggling to make these a reality. This initiative enables integrated national planning for SDGs and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), particularly in low and middle-income countries. It aims to increase the ambition and viability of national climate and development plans by conducting research, extending SEI's planning tools and models, and enhancing capacity in partner countries.

**Tackling Carbon Lock-in.** Due to political and institutional barriers, the fossil-fuel economy is still expanding, and global carbon emissions are still increasing, despite international political agreements and efforts towards emissions reductions. This initiative seeks to uncover and address the interwoven barriers that uphold the fossil fuel-based economy, and how they persist and how they can be unlocked. Through research, policy engagement and communications,

we will identify agendas and policy opportunities to break carbon lock-in, in order to accelerate the transition away from fossil fuels in jurisdictions around the world and at the international level of governance.

**Gridless Solutions.** Small-scale, decentralized and modular technologies can play a key role for providing basic services such as energy, sanitation and fresh water, especially when access to physical infrastructure is constrained. But deployment of these “gridless” technologies is currently limited by, for example, a lack of regulations and standards, access to financing, and workable business models. This initiative will examine dimensions such as market set-ups, costs and benefits, and life-cycle sustainability for deployment of gridless technologies to accelerate progress towards climate and Sustainable Development Goals.

### Global policy engagement

SEI engages with policy and practice at all levels. Over the strategy period we will also ramp up support and engagement at the global level, being closer to and proactive in different governance processes and providing science-based knowledge support. In particular, we will focus on the following agendas:

**2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.** The timeframe of this strategy is aligned with the zenith of the 2030 Agenda, and SEI will prioritize engagement that leads to progress on the SDGs and contribute to their follow up with the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). We will build on our partnerships and known strengths and niches, such as SDG synergies and policy coherence.

**Global climate governance.** SEI will continue long-standing engagements in key international forums such as the UNFCCC, Climate and Clean Air Coalition, and the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), and advance the implementation of the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework, including by informing long-term climate strategies, nationally determined contributions, adaptation planning, and contributing to global assessments such as the IPCC.

**Financing for sustainable development.** SEI will engage with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on development finance, assessing progress and supporting the scaling up and speeding up of sustainable finance practices. We will support international financial actors such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF) in monitoring and evaluating projects and programmes and refining policies and institutional architecture.

**Biodiversity and ecosystems agenda.** SEI will engage with the post-2020 framework of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD). We will work with partner organizations and participate in science-policy processes, including assessments carried out by IPBES (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services) and IPCC, to help strengthen the evidence base, including on impacts on biodiversity from unsustainable production and consumption.

**Ocean agenda.** SEI will initiate a more concerted contribution to building up international ocean governance – a so far relatively neglected area in science and policy. We will contribute to the UN’s Our Ocean conferences and the Ocean Pathway initiative, with knowledge support in areas such as source-to-sea pollution (in particular from nutrients, plastics and chemicals), the “blue” economy and associated financing strategies, and disaster risk reduction.

### Making an impact at all levels

In addition to these global engagements, SEI will continue to work at all levels of governance. For example, at the local level with community governance and city administrations such as the City of Nairobi (Kenya), Umeå Municipality (Sweden) and Chindwin River Basin Organization (Myanmar).

**Table 1** This table shows how the new SEI Initiatives will contribute to different topics under our universal impact areas. It also illustrates our aim to mainstream gender, social equality and poverty perspectives across all our work.

Initiatives			
Impact areas			
	Reduced climate risk	Sustainable resource use and resilient ecosystems	Improved health and well-being
<b>Gender Equality, Social Equality and Poverty</b>			
<b>Integrated Climate and Development Planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governments plan for low-carbon pathways with multiple benefits</li> <li>• Transitions from fossil energy that address inequality, poverty and political economy</li> <li>• More effective international cooperation on climate change</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced air quality strategies in low- and middle-income countries</li> <li>• City planning that improves well-being and environmental health</li> </ul>
<b>Water Beyond Boundaries</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water resource management that is ecosystem-based and holistic</li> </ul>	
<b>Gridless Solutions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Innovation and upscaled investment for industrial transitions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More productive, resilient and sustainable practices in the agricultural sector</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sanitation solutions that are sustainable, healthy and productive are widely scaled up</li> <li>• Shifts to more sustainable lifestyles and consumption</li> </ul>
<b>Tackling Carbon Lock-in</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governments plan for low-carbon pathways with multiple benefits</li> <li>• Transitions from fossil energy that address inequality, poverty and political economy</li> <li>• More effective international cooperation on climate change</li> </ul>		
<b>Bioeconomy Pathways</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transitions from fossil energy that address inequality, poverty and political economy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective bioeconomy strategies in national and regional policy and planning</li> <li>• More productive, resilient and sustainable practices in the agricultural sector</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safer, more effective waste management and circular systems</li> </ul>
<b>City Health and Well-being</b>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City planning that improves well-being and environmental health</li> <li>• Safer, more effective waste management and circular systems</li> <li>• Health and well-being integrated into planning for disasters, migration and displacement</li> </ul>

At the national level, we will continue our long-standing support for and engagement with, for example, ministries, departments and agencies for the environment, energy, water resources, and planning and investment.

At the regional level, we will deepen our engagement with regional political and economic cooperation bodies such as the EU and its institutions, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the African Union, the East African Commission, and the Nordic Council. We will continue to work with regional UN bodies such as UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.



## 4. Enabling delivery

### 4.1 People and culture

Our organizational culture lays the foundation for the way we work with partners and with each other. Our culture is grounded in our development ethos and commitment to resolving sustainability challenges, from local to global. It stands for transparent and inclusive decision making, for building and maintaining trust, for empowering our partners, for giving space to diverse voices, and for delivery of the highest quality. It holds us to ethical standards of integrity, collegiality and respect in all our professional interactions.

Qualified and engaged people are SEI's most important asset, and the impact and quality of our work is a direct result of the skills and commitment of our colleagues around the world. SEI's global human resources policy is called the People Agenda. It describes our ambitions and the steps taken to ensure that SEI provides a safe, professional and creative workspace for all colleagues, fostering well-being.

#### Diversity

Diversity enriches our organization and grounds us in different countries and regions of the world. SEI strives to attract employees from different disciplines, with diverse cultural backgrounds, and of different nationalities. Not only do we need researchers, we also need professionals who, among other things, focus on the policy interface, on project management, on communications, on financial management and on human resources.

#### Equal opportunities

SEI is committed to providing a safe, professional and creative work environment for all colleagues. The SEI Equity, Gender and Diversity Policy clearly states our ambition to build an inclusive, accommodating and diverse work culture, and we conduct annual follow ups. All our employees are required to act in a manner consistent with our global Code of Conduct.

#### Professional development

Professional development is seen as a right at SEI. We develop, support and train our employees to grow in their roles and raise their capabilities. We recognize that ongoing opportunities for professional growth and recognition is crucial for employee retention. Our mentorship programme strengthens cross-centre development, and we ensure constructive and thoughtful feedback on performance to support professional growth. An SEI Leadership Model is focused on leadership skills for those with management responsibilities.

#### Associates and internships

SEI's capacity and expertise is extended through a network of external colleagues who work with, and in the same spirit as, SEI. When mutually desired, the relationship with external colleagues can be formalized into the position of SEI Associate. We also work with higher-education institutions and take on students as interns and offer master's and PhD thesis supervision.

### 4.2 Global operations for collaboration and innovation

Our centres focus on different areas of research determined by the regional relevance of our work and the niche expertise of research staff. This model ensures that we can be relevant to and respond to the needs of regional partners. Employees from different SEI centres collaborate in projects daily, making sure that SEI's diverse competences are deployed effectively. Over the strategy period we will enhance our supporting systems and procedures to make it simpler to

operate as one global organization. Such systems include our intranet, internal knowledge hub, skills database, and collaborative online workspace for projects and initiatives.

### **Formal organization**

To enable delivery and accountability, SEI has a formal line organization that spans the global organization of headquarters and centres, as well as in the individual centres. SEI is headed by a Board, which receives advice from a Science Advisory Council. The Board sets the strategic direction in terms of general objectives, planning and programmes, and on operational issues of major importance. SEI's rules of procedure, policies, instructions and guidelines detail how we govern research, operations and project management.

### **Networked organization**

At the same time as ensuring operational efficiency and accountability through clear line management, SEI maintains features of a networked organization, with softer structures that support innovation and cross-fertilization of ideas across teams. SEI invests in strengthening the interfaces between innovation and operations in order to mobilize teams to bring new ideas to life and turn them into projects. Processes that strengthen innovation include our annual Science Forum and our internal seed and innovation funding scheme.

## **4.3 Monitoring, evaluation and learning**

An enhanced Results and Learning Framework for 2020–24 has been set up to more strongly link the monitoring and evaluation of our research and operations to our organizational learning. This allows us to continually improve our relevance and usefulness to partners.

### **Monitoring**

Our monitoring framework is organized around the four levels of our strategy, which guide the planning, implementation and follow-up of our research. We monitor whether we deliver according to plan, follow required standards, and whether we are doing so as effectively as possible. We also monitor the extent to which our audiences are aware of, accessing and sharing our work. After collecting evidence of our impact on agendas, capacities and decisions, we develop and share “change stories” to report to our stakeholders and enable internal learning. Lastly, we assess whether we are following our strategy, by tracking whether our work is in line with our priorities for change (see section 2).

### **Evaluation**

The way we evaluate our work is structured around five main activities. For external evaluation, we invite external critical observers to make recommendations on how we can strengthen our delivery and impact over the longer term. SEI's Science Advisory Council regularly examines achievements and progress in key research areas. In the strategy period we will formalize how we gather partner feedback through annual surveys that will invite partners to provide structured and critical responses to their institutional engagement with SEI. During project implementation we invite stakeholders to give feedback on an ongoing basis, and all programmes, initiatives and large projects are required to carry out end-of-project evaluation.

### **Learning**

An important part of organizational life at SEI is about learning. We enact change inside the organization based on insights from monitoring and evaluation. This means adapting our focus, our approach and operational processes. As a learning organization we continually strive to

enhance our capacity to deliver results and nurture new, creative, collective knowledge and patterns of thinking.

SEI has a scheme of learning activities to ensure that the monitoring and reporting on outputs and outcomes from research activities are fed back into the organization. Such activities include end of project evaluation meetings, topical or operational learning sessions, the SEI Science Forum and cross-centre meetings on the “what” and “how” of our work. Evidence based change stories – that capture the changes that SEI has contributed to and how these came about – are gathered and shared for learning purposes. We regularly assess our effectiveness in achieving outcomes, capturing key success factors and the dos and don’ts of, for example, stakeholder engagement.

We use SEI’s online platforms to enable wide participation, learning and knowledge exchange, while minimizing travel. These platforms ensure efficient, transparent and accessible internal communication.

#### **4.4 Communications**

Our communication activities are strategic and agenda-setting and make research insights accessible and actionable. Over the strategy period we will place more emphasis on knowledge synthesis and reaching key international policy audiences. We use our global presence to develop narratives and ground our engagement in local needs and help our partners tell their stories – of the challenges they face, and the ways in which knowledge can unlock sustainable development. Traditional communication products are complemented with tools and services that enable practitioners to apply knowledge directly to their decision making or deliberation processes. Our communication will continue to strive to be as accessible as possible and informed by the latest science and technologies available for effective communication.

#### **4.5 Quality, integrity and independence**

Effective, efficient and accountable delivery in our projects is the foundation of our operations. SEI implements research and engages in projects with partners around the world, which entails exposure to risks in project management and delivery. Risk management and quality assurance procedures regularly assess and address risks to project performance in project planning and implementation. Over the strategy period, we will continue to invest in strengthening and developing our central procedures and systems for project management, accountability, quality in delivery, and principles of organizational and financial governance.

#### **4.6 Ethical practice**

SEI’s ethical practice has as a minimum requirement to avoid harm while aiming to enhance human well-being and ensure we maintain the highest possible quality and integrity in our work. It also provides for an open and constructive space for dialogue and sharing of perspectives. All projects and activities are expected to adhere to the Ethics Statement and the SEI Code of Conduct, which outlines our commitment to ethical practice. To make sure that our work meets the highest ethical standards, SEI provides guidelines for how ethical considerations should be incorporated into project planning, implementation and evaluation. All projects where there is a risk of harm to any participants should undergo a formal ethics approval process by an appropriate third party, or an internal ethics review.

#### **4.7 Environmental policy**

Over the strategy period SEI will implement our strengthened Environmental Policy. SEI’s mandate requires us to consider the choices we make within our workplaces, how we plan projects and collaborate, and how and when we travel. SEI expects all colleagues to consider how their actions at work affect the environment and whether more sustainable, yet

effective, options are available. A key focus is on air travel, which makes up a major part of the Institute’s environmental impact. The nature of SEI’s work on the international level and doing relevant, grounded work with partners across regions means that there will always be a requirement to travel. At the same time, we encourage ways of interacting remotely, and we have conversations across continents every day. The distributed centre structure of SEI also contributes to efficiency in travel requirements.

The policy requires each SEI centre to develop and implement an annual action plan that charts progress on environmental targets and sets plans for the coming year to minimize negative effects. Importantly, each centre operates within a different context and faces different constraints that influence the sets of measures it can take to reduce its environmental impact.

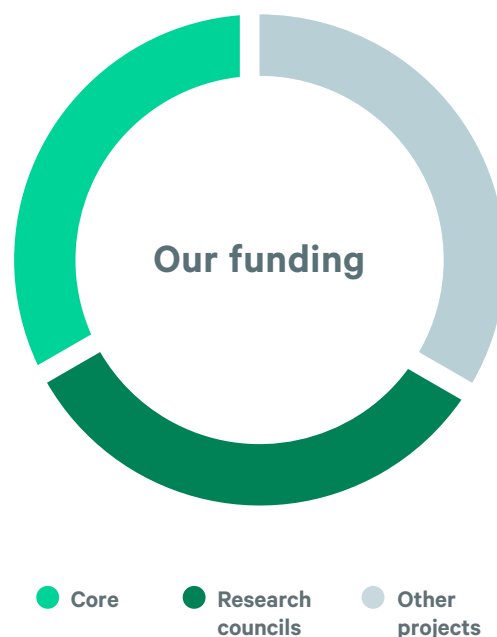
SEI monitors and reports carbon emissions from air travel using an approach that encourages each employee to reflect on the necessity, frequency and mode of travel. Where appropriate, online meetings and remote participation in events are prioritized as the primary mode of international collaboration. They are also a fundamental tool not only to minimize our travel emissions, but also to extend our reach to broader and bigger audiences.

Over the strategy period we have set a quantitative emissions reduction target: to reduce the carbon travel footprint by at least 25% per capita from 2017 to 2024 for the Institute as a whole. During this period, we are also examining the potential for deeper emissions cuts by reviewing how we can work and engage with partners in the future, drawing on the opportunities that new technologies offer.

#### 4.8 Resilient and diverse funding base

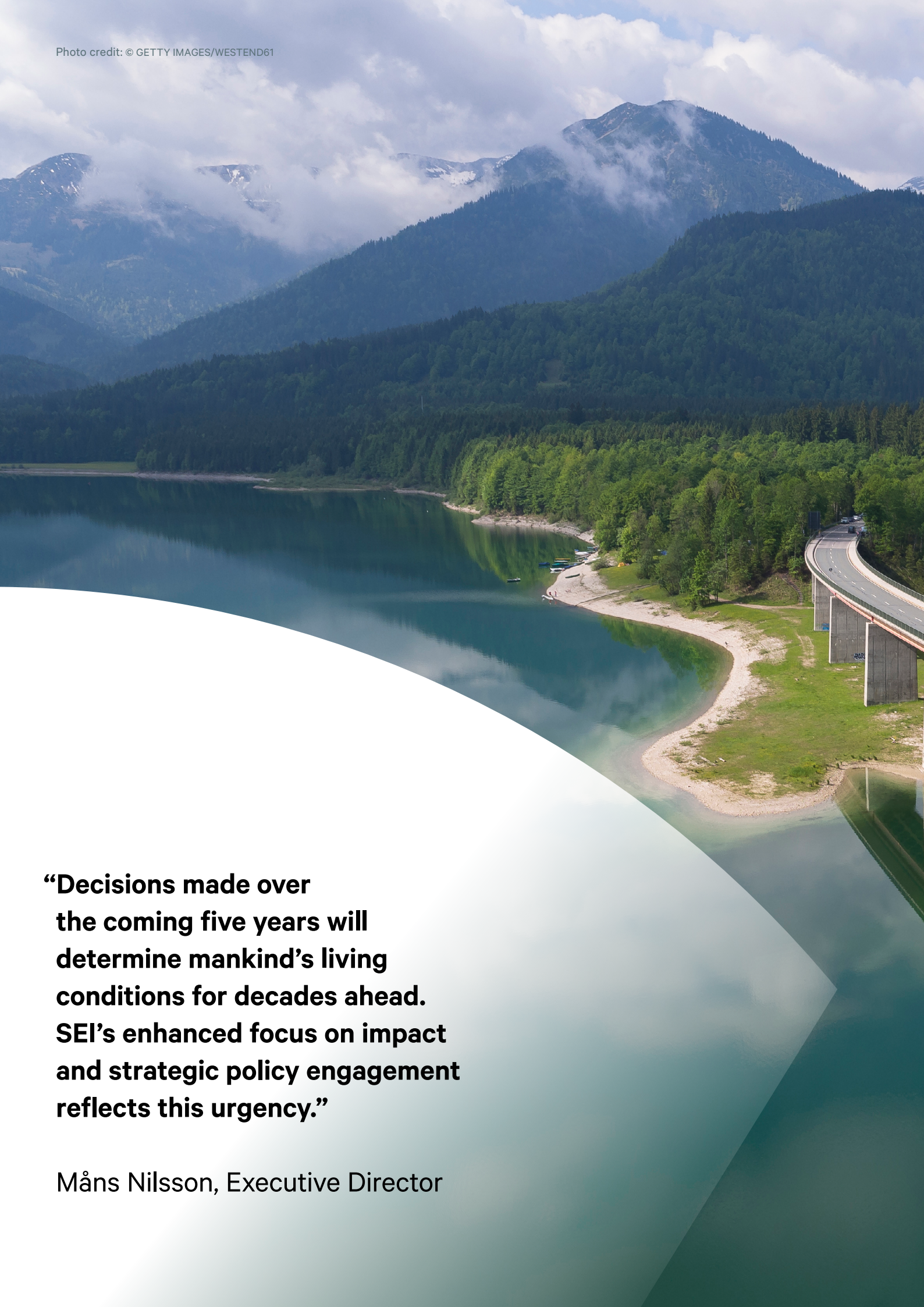
Many SEI employees take responsibility for fundraising by regularly securing large and long-term research grants. Our Swedish core funding base reflects our mission in the field of environment and development, with one core pillar from environment and the other from development cooperation. This base enables us to ensure quality and sound governance of the institute, to invest strategically and to develop and maintain a diverse and robust funding portfolio, spanning national research councils, EU bodies, international organizations and foundations, government agencies, universities, institutes and NGOs.

Figure 5 Main sources of funding



Over the strategy period, we will continue to build a strong, resilient and diverse funding base for SEI operations by focusing on:

- core funding, to enable proactive and strategic investment and co-funding
- diversified programmatic and project level fundraising
- quality in delivery as the best way to attract new funds
- proposal coordination and quality assurance
- developing new funding models for tools and platforms, and
- developing lasting and strategic partnerships with funders that have similar goals.



**“Decisions made over  
the coming five years will  
determine mankind’s living  
conditions for decades ahead.  
SEI’s enhanced focus on impact  
and strategic policy engagement  
reflects this urgency.”**

Måns Nilsson, Executive Director



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