

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR TRANSFORMATION

Insights from Session 4, Breakout Group 5 of the TCLP 2021 May Virtual Workshop, *Transformational Change and Climate Finance: Moving from Emerging Concepts to Advanced Practices*

Facilitated by **Regan Smurthwaite**, CIF TCLP

Featuring **Daniel Kehrer**, GIZ, and **Heila Lotz-Sisitka**, Rhodes University

On May 25-26, 2021, hundreds of people from 57 countries came together in a virtual workshop organized by [Climate Investment Funds'](#) (CIF) [Transformational Change Learning Partnership](#) (TCLP). Workshop participants engaged in multiple forums to tackle questions related to how practitioners can catalyze and contribute to the transformational change that is imperative to achieving an inclusive, climate neutral, resilient, and sustainable world. During the fourth and final session of the workshop, participants selected one of five breakout groups to dive deeper into a particular area of work and what it will take to advance transformational practice and impact: 1) Long-term Planning and Programmatic Approach; 2) Systems and Actor Mapping; 3) Integrating Transformation in the Project Cycle; 4) Evaluative Practice; and 5) Building Capacity for Transformation. This document summarizes key insights, resources, and opportunities to advance transformational change from concept to practice with approached for Building Capacity for Transformation identified in the group's discussion.

Key Insights on Building Capacity Towards Transformational Change

Daniel Kehrer discussed the impact-complexity trap and the ways in which this trap reduces the ability of programs to have positive impacts in complex environments. Heila Lotz-Sisitka discussed how concepts and activity can be transformed via "T-learning": learning that is Transformative, Transgressive, Transdisciplinary, and Together. Key insights from the session include:

- 1. Transformative, transgressive learning (T-learning) requires addressing tensions and contradictions in systems relative to our concepts, activities, and goals.**
 - This will require moving from a paradigm that is competition-based to one that is cooperation- and collaboration-based.
 - Competition is associated with efficiency and effectiveness, but it leads to distrust and a scarcity mindset. Most people prefer to work in cooperative environments where they can collaborate, trust others, and utilize their skills.
 - We need to clarify the narratives that become normalized, so we can engage with them. Addressing climate change is often framed as a "war against" greenhouse gas emissions, fossil fuels, etc. rather than centering action on restoring our Earth and environment.

2. **T-learning requires taking a multi-level perspective, involving people at multiple levels of an activity system to develop new concepts and activities.**
 - Because T-learning involves bringing together a diverse set of actors, strong facilitation and mediation of the learning process is necessary.
 - Investments should be made in the capacity of “boundary spanners” to help facilitate and mediate transformational changes.
 - We will know that capacity building interventions have succeeded when we see changes in the activities of organizations that have received training and technical assistance.

3. **To escape the impact-complexity trap, achieve T-learning, and build our transform-abilities, processes and policies governing programs and projects need to be adjusted to enable learning, experimentation, and adaptive management.**
 - As part of the learning process, focus on the process and principles established when developing an intervention. Think about whether the intervention was consistent in applying those principles.
 - We need tools, processes, and approaches to collectively learn from “failure”, or deviation from intended impacts.
 - Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning activities should focus on opportunities for expansion and course adjustment. When assessing capacity, we need to think about collective activity rather than capacity at an individual level.
 - Flexible financing approaches that can scale as needed to overcome barriers, shift resources to emergent needs and opportunities. Need longer term funding windows that allow for collaborative practices to evolve properly.

Opportunities to Advance Practices Towards Transformational Change

There are opportunities to develop resources, support experimentation, and catalyze learning that supports transformational change through climate action, including:

- Design education systems to strengthen capacity for transformative learning.
- Learn through and in action on just transitions away from fossil fuel usage.
- Create more space for experimentation in new CIF projects.
- Develop case studies and toolkits of new approaches to program and project design.
- Provide more integrated MERL frameworks, rather than separate M&R and E&L frameworks, to better meet donor requests.
- Identify incremental opportunities to include co-operative indicators into MFI project design (e.g., Quality of life indices vs GDP).

Building Capacity for Transformation Resources

- Darling, et al. [Emergent Learning: A Framework for Whole-System Strategy, Learning, and Adaptation](#). 2016.
- GIZ. [Transforming Our Work: Getting Ready for Transformational Projects](#). February 2020.
- GIZ. [Transformative Project Design](#). November 2020.
- Heifetz, et al. [The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World](#). 2009.

- Rosenberg, et al. [Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting & Learning for the USAID RESILIM-O Program](#). 2017.
- [TransgressiveLearning.org](#)

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More Information

The insights and opportunities captured in this document reflect ongoing efforts by the TCLP to use research, analysis, expert opinion, and collaborative discussion to advance transformational change when designing, implementing, monitoring, evaluating, and learning from climate investments. For more information, please visit the [TCLP website](#).

