



Wilton Park



Report

## **Exploring pathways to transformational climate action**

Tuesday 10 May 2022 | WP3059



## Report

# Exploring pathways to transformational climate action

Tuesday 10 May 2022 | WP3059

**In association with the International Development Evaluation Association IDEAS, Climate Investment Funds, Global Environment Facility, Green Climate Fund, University of Sussex, Institute of Development Studies, United Nations Development Programme Independent Evaluation Office, International Evaluation Academy, International Fund for Agricultural Development.**

## Background

Climate change is a defining issue of our time. It continues to threaten societies globally and its economic, social, and environmental impacts are a challenge for us all. Major changes will be necessary in our economies and societies and need to be effectuated in record time. To succeed, they will need to be systemic and comprehensive and include perspectives such as climate justice, just transition, and the full range of Sustainable Development Goals.

A series of dialogues have brought together participants from the often-disconnected worlds of policy action, research and evaluation to discuss how to improve collaboration across these sectors to support transformational action for climate change. After a first event in June 2020, in collaboration with the World Bank and its gLOCAL week of global interactions, this series of dialogues on transformational change for climate action restarted in September 2021 ([read the report here](#)). This first meeting explored how the world of research, evaluation, policy and action can collaborate to promote transformational change. A [second meeting](#) was held in February 2022 where participants discussed existing evidence and ways to break down the many practical, political and structural barriers that challenge transformational change for climate action.

This third meeting was held in May 2022, to further explore concrete cases on how transformational climate action can take place and identify ways to break down the many practical, political and structural barriers to lead to improved collaboration and aligned networks. A future meeting, and the final in the series, will take place at Wilton Park in September 2022.

Reactions to [transformationalchange@wiltonpark.org.uk](mailto:transformationalchange@wiltonpark.org.uk)

## Key points

- Case studies from China showed the power of top-down action to put legislation into place to hold companies to account, which enabled bottom-up public participation in identifying environmental violations and litigation processes. Linking threats of legislation to the use of new technologies can promote shifts in industry practices, which supports transformational change.

- Case studies from Mexico demonstrated that addressing power asymmetries is a crucial part of transformational change for climate action. Ensuring social inclusion of women and youth who are often marginalised and excluded from development processes and decision-making leads to more meaningful transformations.
- A draft high-level note to be published as an output of this series could be further strengthened by clearly identifying the key audiences it aims to reach, the purpose of the note and what it is trying to achieve, along with a sharpened focus on transformational change.

## Transformation in climate action – examples in practice

Discussions focused around four cases - two from China and two from Mexico – that demonstrate pathways towards transformational change in practice.

“China’s efforts also show how hard it is to make rapid progress.”

### Environmental public interest litigation in China – Holland and Knight LLP

1. The first case focused on Environmental Public Interest Litigation (EPIL) in China. This approach was triggered for a number of reasons including that China’s environmental efficiency is inadequate, government enforcement was weak, and public concern and interest about the environment is rising in China. China needs a transformational change to better manage its environment.
2. EPIL plays a positive role in China and is broad, with both the government and non-governmental organisations bringing cases against companies. As a result of EPIL, companies are more vigilant and careful about their performance, as they do not want to be brought to court as a defendant. Litigation areas to date include environmental pollution, air, water, and solid waste, and ecological damage such as forest degradation. About 60% of cases are in favour of the plaintiff not the defendant.
3. There are up to 3500 EPIL cases each year, and while this demonstrates a stronger direction towards transformational change and highlights the legal opportunities for civil society to support public interest, there remains room for improvement. EPIL is currently only for past damage, and not applied to potential future damage; work is underway to create an ex-ante EPIL that could contribute to prevention.

### Blue map for zero carbon - Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs

“China’s policy framework for carbon peak and neutrality will require a total transformation and restructuring of industries: lifestyle, leisure, travel, heating etc.”

4. With a looming energy crisis, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and rising geopolitical tensions, China’s transition to zero carbon economy is tougher than expected. The Blue Map Project is a publicly available, open-source database accessible through a website and app, aiming to address emissions and support China’s journey to a zero-carbon economy.
5. Starting with local air emissions and water pollution problems, the online database engages the public to participate and report violations by companies. So far, tens of thousands of “micro-reports” have been filed by citizens against violators, and thousands of companies have responded. The Blue Map tracks the performance of 10 million companies, and 17,000 suppliers have so far addressed violations and/or measured and reported their carbon emissions.
6. A corporate climate action map highlights all the commitments that companies make, and how they are reducing their carbon footprint. A counting platform supports companies to count their emissions, and major banks have tapped into this, so companies that want to borrow money need to be able to count their emissions. The project is also developing and enabling credible carbon labelling for consumers to facilitate greener choices.

## Lessons from the China case studies

- Developing accountability mechanisms is an important dimension that can facilitate transformation to more sustainable pathways, laying the foundations for important behaviour change.
- Climate actions need the support of credible data infrastructure, which is transparent and accessible to the public.
- Combining top-down legal regulations and bottom-up public participation approaches is effective for transformational climate action. For example, NGOs use the public database and target companies for litigation.

## Strengthening indigenous capacity for climate action - Rainforest Alliance Mexico

“It’s so important to listen to, and learn from, people and communities who often are marginalised and excluded from development processes and decision-making.”

7. In Mexico, 70% of forest coverage belongs to collectives with a system of ownership for common use. It is important to consider carbon emissions as a result of forest community and agrarian activities, and to mitigate against climate change. The Dedicated Grant Mechanism (DGM) for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities strengthens the capacity of people who depend on forests and jungles including those without land tenure rights to take effective climate action.
8. This case presented work focused on the active inclusion of women and young people to participate in programmes to mitigate forest degradation and the impact of climate change. Many women and young people do not usually have access to these kinds of projects, as they do not own land, do not have technical knowledge and do not fulfil the requirements to participate.
9. Mitigation of the impact of forest degradation enabled social inclusion, creating 22 women-led projects, with 4 times as many women participants as in previous projects. The organisational structure, governance system and application of affirmative action, with appropriate safeguarding measures, ensured effective women and youth participation in training, capacity building, and decision-making at traditionally male community assemblies.

## Including women and youth in sustainable projects - Mexico’s DGM National Steering Committee

“The emphasis is on knowledge and power - we need to ensure knowledge and practical insights are shared locally and globally.”

10. For indigenous people, jobs and sustainable projects are crucial in responding to climate change and taking climate action. Managing and monitoring the DGM is important, and the DGM’s National Steering Committee created two different windows for action: the national inclusion window where communities’ own projects and create jobs, and the social inclusion window that brings together social justice, inclusion, and territory issues.
11. Including women and youth, who do not have land tenure rights, is important and through community assemblies, they are able to work on projects and enhance social justice. The Mexican government issued a declaration that there should be gender equality, however, progress still needs to be made. Communities stated there could be improvements in budgets, community processes and meetings in relation to gender equality.
12. Positive transformations include that grants are now given directly to women and youth. Participation and progress also go beyond the scope of the project, with groups of women and youth coming together to make greater use of resources, by selling products in the markets. Although this is a pilot project, there are also opportunities to consolidate and scale up the collective efforts of women and youth across Mexico, to formalise efforts and transform on a larger scale.

“We can’t assume success in simply bringing knowledge that changes policy and practices of reluctant governments, although evidence is undoubtedly important.”

“Without aiming for transformational change, we are ‘just reshuffling the chairs on the deck on the Titanic’. We do not need small symbolic (policy) interventions but system changing ones.”

## Lessons from the Mexico case studies

- Awareness and appreciation of the importance of knowledge, experience and perspectives of indigenous peoples and communities must emphasise social inclusion, with the strong participation of women and youth.
- Structural inequalities still prevent indigenous people from participating in major decision-making processes and need to be addressed to support more inclusive and just transformations.
- When participation is effective, it goes beyond the scope of a particular project and opens opportunities for greater empowerment and meaningful transformation.

## Discussion on draft high-level note on transformational change

Participants shared reflections on a draft high-level note on transformational change, taking into consideration lessons from the case studies presented, whether there were any gaps or omissions, and where the note could have most influence. This note will be further developed in the coming months and finalized during the in-person meeting in September 2022.

### Key feedback included:

13. **Be clear about the purpose of the note.** What is it trying to achieve? What action is it calling for? Is the note intended to contribute to transformational change? The note is currently high-level and therefore somewhat vague. It could be a much more ambitious note challenging current economic systems and power relations, with a stronger position about the transformations that are needed; or it could be a more practical and targeted note specifically from the evaluation community about what the community can and should contribute to transformational climate action. As a very high-level statement, it risks getting lost at COP27. How do we make it more powerful? What is our specific hook to make both the note and the group stand out?
14. **Be clear about the audience.** The note does not clarify what action is needed and by whom. Who needs to do what differently to advance transformational change? The note could have influence with the following audiences: ECG (Evaluation group of the Banks), UNEG, IFAD, COP27, OECD, and the global M&E community more broadly.
15. **Look at the possibility to restructure the content** with a clear introduction of the purpose and audience, using organising areas of definitions, lessons, and recommendations for action.
16. **Have a second look at the framing of the paper around ‘transformational change’**, as currently the paper seems to switch between SDGs and climate action and promoting the SDGs through transformational change.
17. **Identify opportunities to add content for areas that are missing including the:**
  - scale at which change is needed, and a more explicit articulation of the theory of change that promotes transformation
  - acknowledgement of current political systems and geo-political tensions which have implications for climate action
  - impact of poverty and inequality, building on the social inclusion conversation
  - gender
  - role of communities in climate action, and the challenges they face
  - role of political leaders, and those that have the power to make decisions

- importance of communication and education about transformational change, especially in schools and among youth as part of intergenerational justice
- need to strengthen monitoring and evaluation, the use of evidence and decision-making as part of improving understandings of transformational change.

18. **Elevate the importance of knowledge exchange** as different actors and organisations working on transformational change need to improve how they share theory, tools, practice, insights, and lessons learnt with each other. An effective mechanism to do this must be identified and put in place to enhance more powerful joint action.

## Resources

### Transformational Change Learning Partnership (TCLP) Learning Brief

[https://www.climateinvestmentfunds.org/cif\\_enc/sites/cif\\_enc/files/knowledge-documents/tc\\_concepts\\_brief.pdf](https://www.climateinvestmentfunds.org/cif_enc/sites/cif_enc/files/knowledge-documents/tc_concepts_brief.pdf)

### Mexico case study – the contribution of the forest investment program to forest and investment goals

[https://climateinvestmentfunds.org/sites/cif\\_enc/files/knowledge-documents/mexico\\_tc.pdf](https://climateinvestmentfunds.org/sites/cif_enc/files/knowledge-documents/mexico_tc.pdf)

[https://www.climateinvestmentfunds.org/sites/cif\\_enc/files/knowledge-documents/mexico\\_tc\\_summary\\_1.pdf](https://www.climateinvestmentfunds.org/sites/cif_enc/files/knowledge-documents/mexico_tc_summary_1.pdf)

### China's ongoing green transformations

<https://www.newstatesman.com/environment/climate/2022/05/why-the-world-underestimates-chinas-climate-action-at-its-peril>

### A good resource for news about environment and climate action in China

<https://chinadialogue.net/en/>

### China council for international cooperation on environment and development

<https://cciced.eco>

### Energy transitions in sub-Saharan Africa are about more than mobilizing finance

<https://www.diis.dk/en/research/energy-transitions-in-sub-saharan-africa-are-about-more-than-mobilizing-finance>

### OECD evaluation criteria

<https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

### Alison Dunn

Wilton Park | May 2022

Wilton Park reports are intended to be brief summaries of the main points and conclusions of an event. Reports reflect rapporteurs' accounts of the proceedings and do not necessarily reflect the views of the rapporteur. Wilton Park reports and any recommendations contained therein are for participants and are not a statement of policy for Wilton Park, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) or Her Majesty's Government.

Should you wish to read other Wilton Park reports, or participate in upcoming Wilton Park events, please consult our website [www.wiltonpark.org.uk](http://www.wiltonpark.org.uk). To receive our monthly bulletin and latest updates, please subscribe to <https://www.wiltonpark.org.uk/newsletter/>