1.3.0

CLIMATE RESILIENCE FRAMEWORK
ISET-INTERNATIONAL

THE SHARED LEARNING DIALOGUE PROCESS

Contents of Set

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In this set, you will be introduced to Shared Learning Dialogues (SLDs) as tools for helping you to bring together diverse sets of agents from your city to understand potential climate change impacts for your city and create and effect a process that builds your city's resilience. SLDs are iterative, transparent group discussions with agents such as—local community actors, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations, community groups or universities—designed to bring together outside perspectives and local knowledge on climate and the development challenges your city faces.

In Set 1.2, you identified potential agents that are important to your city resilience process—those who will make decisions and those who will be impacted by such decisions. In this Set, you will learn about SLDs as tools for engaging with the stakeholders you identified in Set 1.2. You will also learn how you can use SLDs to facilitate and keep the resilience process going in your city.

IN THIS SET YOU WILL:

✓ Answer a series of questions to get you thinking about how to structure and use SLDs in your planning process.

✓ Think of key features that should be included in your first SLD.

✓ Think of key features that should be included in any subsequent SLDs that your city will hold.

Overview

Generating effective responses to the consequences of climate change requires understanding both the emerging scientific knowledge as well as the range of local factors that influence climate change's effects on individuals, communities, and urban systems, including ecosystems. For many people and organizations, the scientific research and modeling are often difficult to access and interpret to the local context. Conversely, localized information, knowledge, and experience are regularly unavailable to climate change scientists at national or international levels. ISET uses a shared learning dialogue (SLD) process, drawing on experiences and techniques from participatory action research, to help diverse sets of stakeholders bridge these scientific to local knowledge gaps.

The purpose of an SLD is to bridge the division between what scientists know about climate change and what a variety of stakeholders from your city know about the hazards your city faces, as well as your city's capacities and challenges for handling current and future climate hazards, variability, and change. SLDs provide your city stakeholders with a working understanding of climate change issues in a setting that allows them to utilize diverse knowledge and skills to generate effective local responses. SLDs are informed by specific information compiled or generated to support the

engagement, including climate science and model results, vulnerability and risk assessments, and possibly in-depth studies undertaken to address information gaps. Through this process, local partners and relevant stakeholders increase their understanding of climate change in general and how it will impact and affect the city, particularly for vulnerable groups and areas.

The SLD process is not simply a series of meetings. An SLD is a semi-structured and carefully facilitated series of interactions that include opportunities for all stakeholders to participate and interact—through a structured meeting, workshop, or focus group discussions. This can prove challenging, and potentially frustrating, for organizers and participants alike. Depending on how they are designed, SLDs can challenge conventional power dynamics, contradict existing and seemingly well-established practices, and give rise to interaction between actors that feel foreign and uncomfortable to their expectations. Yet, changing these power relationships are critical to building resilience to multiple shocks beyond just climate change. The structure and composition of an SLD process is highly adaptable. The facilitator can choose to use any number of tools and techniques to meet the needs of the organizers and adjust to the social context while still generating discussion and interaction. Advanced organization of an SLD is required in order to best include and integrate the global and local

KEY ATTRIBUTES OF SHARED LEARNING PROCESSES

Size, composition, format, and structure of an SLD vary depending on the context, objectives, and strategic decisions you are trying to make during the course of your resilience process. However, all shared learning processes have the following key attributes, described below.

Information sharing is multi-directional: Local stakeholders representing disparate sectors, scales, or perspectives should learn from each other. Local stakeholders should learn from international knowledge presented by external experts; and external experts should learn from local stakeholders.

The process involves diverse stakeholders in an open manner: Participants from diverse groups, interests and responsibilities can contribute their views and experiences without prejudice.

The process is iterative and ongoing: Participants have time to absorb and think about the information and perspectives of different, both during the SLD and between SLDs, and work towards the development of specific mechanisms for responding to climate change risks. A single SLD will never be enough for shared learning or developing common goals. The process takes time and multiple SLDs.

The process crosses scales, communities, and organizational and disciplinary boundaries: Shared learning dialogues bring together local, regional, national and global scientific perspectives and seek to overcome knowledge systems divides typical of sectors. The dialogues will occur at multiple levels where engagement is necessary to catalyze effective action.

Shared learning assembles groups reflecting different socio-economic, gender, geographic and cultural groupings: Because patterns of vulnerability often differ between such groupings, the goal is to ensure, as far as possible, that shared learning processes capture different marginalized groups (caste, religion, age, gender, physical mobility) and access to evaluate the equitability of proposed actions.

!! Keep this tip with you as you begin your SLD as a helpful reminder

knowledge needed to further the planning process. You will also want to use a skilled facilitator that is familiar with local issues, power structures, and sensitivities.

Early meetings can be intensive discussions used to develop baseline appreciation for the need of the dialogue process, some measure of trust and respect among the various actors, and a common understanding of the issue being addressed. Later iterations may focus on incorporating cooperatively generated information, such as assessments of local vulnerability and risk, into the pool of common knowledge. Later SLDs may also aim to create further opportunities to understand the complexities and nuances of how global trends such as climate change and urbanization will interact in nonlinear ways to affect local response opportunities and priorities. The spacing of the SLD gatherings is also flexible—the need to balance the resilience process momentum together with the time needed to absorb new information, appreciate new relationships among actors and institutions, and generate meaningful new knowledge inputs into the dialogue all influence the spacing of the meetings. Finally, because iteration in the SLD process is central to the sequential development of understanding, a core group of regular participants is required, although not all participants need attend every gathering. New participants should also be welcomed for their fresh perspectives and contributions, especially as your city's resilience process evolves and

expands. SLDs should be held in places, like schools or community centers, which minimize participants' discomfort and social inequality.

Planning a Shared Learning Dialogue

In structuring and choosing methods for a Shared Learning Dialogue, you should consider:

Objectives: A Shared Learning Dialogue is designed to bring together local and global expertise. However, for each SLD, you need to decide what your objectives are for that specific SLD and how you will facilitate the SLD to cover your objectives. Some objectives might be:

- Provision of knowledge inputs for decision-making, strategic planning processes or interventions design;

- Building common understanding of vulnerabilities among stakeholders;

- Capacity building of partners or local organizations;

- Building shared vision among local stakeholders;

- Engaging interest, support, and local ownership for planning processes or interventions among stakeholders;

- Awareness raising and provision of public information;

- Building a knowledge basis from which a specific study or research project can be launched.

These objectives are in no way mutually exclusive, and in fact may strongly support each other. They are likely to change or evolve during the process, and planners should be prepared to be flexible as new needs or priorities are identified.

Once identified, the objectives should guide the design of the overall process. Important considerations include:

Responsibility for Planning and Decision-Making: Shared Learning Dialogues require consistent review and decisions on next steps. One individual or group may initiate the process and plans, but they may find it valuable for this role to include other stakeholders as the process moves forward. This can be an important aspect of promoting a locally driven and broadly managed implementation.

Composition of stakeholders and material: Based on project objectives and scale, you should consider:

- What stakeholders need to be included;

- What kinds of power or social inequalities might exist between different stakeholders, and how you will mitigate such inequalities during an SLD so that all

may share knowledge and learn from each other.

- While you may invite stakeholders based on objectives and strategic considerations, composition will also reflect self-selection of stakeholders into the process. You may need to devise methods of engaging stakeholders who are not initially interested in the topic or interactions. *The organizations, government departments, and individuals you identified in 1.2 should be stakeholders included in your SLDs.* As time progresses and the resilience process grows, you will find that you need to include other stakeholders in subsequent SLDs.

Participants may vary from SLD to SLD depending on what the SLD topic is. For example, an SLD might be held mid-way through the vulnerability and risk assessments to review initial findings and fine-tune the focus of the subsequent analysis. An SLD of this sort might include a couple of city departments and NGOs involved in livelihoods and housing, but might not include water and power utilities, the governors' office, and city finance office, though these players would all be desirable at a larger SLD which reviewed the final vulnerability and risk assessment results.

Mechanism(s) for leadership and decision making:
Importantly, you need to consider how (i.e. through whom or what) knowledge will be shared in the process. In ISET

experience, one or more facilitators or a "core group" of stakeholders have acted as the repository of knowledge responsible for collecting and passing information between different stakeholders. While other stakeholders may attend only a handful of meetings, the facilitator or core group participants should participate in all stakeholder interactions. The nodal facilitators or core group may ultimately be responsible for taking action and/or assisting other groups to take action, in which case their involvement is also important for capacity building. When appropriate, large multi-stakeholders meetings provide a mechanism through which stakeholders can communicate and share multi-directionally.

Style of engagement: Different objectives will require different types of engagement, and there may need to be multiple styles of engaging stakeholders within a single process. For instance, certain government officials may only be willing or available to meet one-on-one with a facilitator. Marginalized communities and especially women may be less able to voice their opinions in large group setting verbally or with a male facilitator. Experiences from Participatory Rural Assessments (PRA) provide many insights into the best ways to promote shared learning with poor or marginalized groups. While small focus group sessions are important, large multi-stakeholder gatherings offer advantages in terms of promoting transparency and fostering new partnerships and understandings if unequal power dynamics are deliberately minimized through meeting structure and skilled facilitation.

Timeframe: The time needed to conduct a shared learning process depends on the objectives, scale, and context. Shared learning processes in a large city, for instance, may take more time than a process in a rural community in which systems are less complex. Capacity building for a specific group of stakeholders, on the other hand, may require a multi-year investment of time. You should not underestimate the amount of time required for the process. Rather, you should build in flexibility with the understanding that building relationships, and incorporating new findings and objectives may demand more time. In principle, the shared learning process should not end with the official project, but should initiate an ongoing and lasting dialogue between stakeholders.

Iteration is a key aspect of the Shared Learning Dialogue, but the type of iteration, with whom, and how frequently should be a strategic decision of the core working group in consultation with the facilitator. During this initial resilience process, you will want to hold 3 or 4 SLDs.

None of these design considerations—objectives, scale, composition, style of engagement, mechanism for knowledge sharing, and timeline—are static. Objectives are likely to change, and may therefore require additional stakeholder involvement, new participants, types of meetings and engagements, or a larger scale or longer time. The facilitator

may also change in certain cases if deemed strategically desirable (for instance, hand-over of the project leadership from external organization to local group).

✕ Tools for Engaging Participants

Within Shared Learning Dialogue meetings, you can use a variety of tools to stimulate discussion and knowledge exchange. These include:

Facilitated breakout discussion groups, usually with a prescribed set of questions depending on the specific context—for instance, "What are the most vulnerable groups or districts in the city?" "Do you agree or disagree with the studies presented?"

Matrices within breakout sessions to help participants identify vulnerable populations, areas (see exercises for example of vulnerability matrix).

Ranking exercises: During breakout sessions, groups are asked to provide rankings, for instance to prioritize vulnerable areas/groups, projects or proposed activities based on criteria provided by facilitators.

Note cards: Participants are encouraged to write

comments and questions on note cards, as a means of providing feedback when time is limited and/or to engage participants who are less comfortable presenting their views publicly.

Scenario development can be used at various stages of the process as a visioning exercise or to inform resilience planning. For example, facilitators present and request participant input for envisioning three future climate and development scenarios describing "Business as Usual", "No Holds Barred Development," and "Sustainable 'Green' Growth."

The "Tools" section of our website (TRAINING.I-S-E-T.ORG) provides more tools—as well as their descriptions and example exercises—that you can use in your SLDs. Many of the exercises embedded within the sets themselves, can also be used in SLDs. While you do some of these exercises, feel free to note what exercises you like and to modify them for your context.

SUCCESSFUL SLDS REQUIRE

Careful, thoughtful preparation and planning. A variety of formats, methods, and sequencing are possible for SLDs. Advance planning should review the project objectives, the stakeholders needed to address those objectives, the capacity and knowledge of those stakeholders, the desired SLD outcomes, and take into account cultural and other constraints.

Skilled facilitators with strong understanding of the local context.

A substantial time commitment—a minimum of several months to several years, depending on the project scale and the degree to which stakeholders differ initially in their level of understanding and openness to new knowledge. The wider the initial divides, the more time that will probably be required. Substantial time allocations are also essential to ensure that process leaders and facilitators are able to reach the full spectrum of stakeholders, absorb and contextualize new concepts, conduct sufficiently rigorous research, and incorporate new knowledge into planning processes.

Iteration. Multiple iterative sessions allow for sequential growth in understanding and typically lead to increased levels of comfort and more meaningful dialogue among participants.

The presence of a core group of stakeholders with a willingness to maintain an open-minded attitude and a willingness to both share and listen to the ideas of others.

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