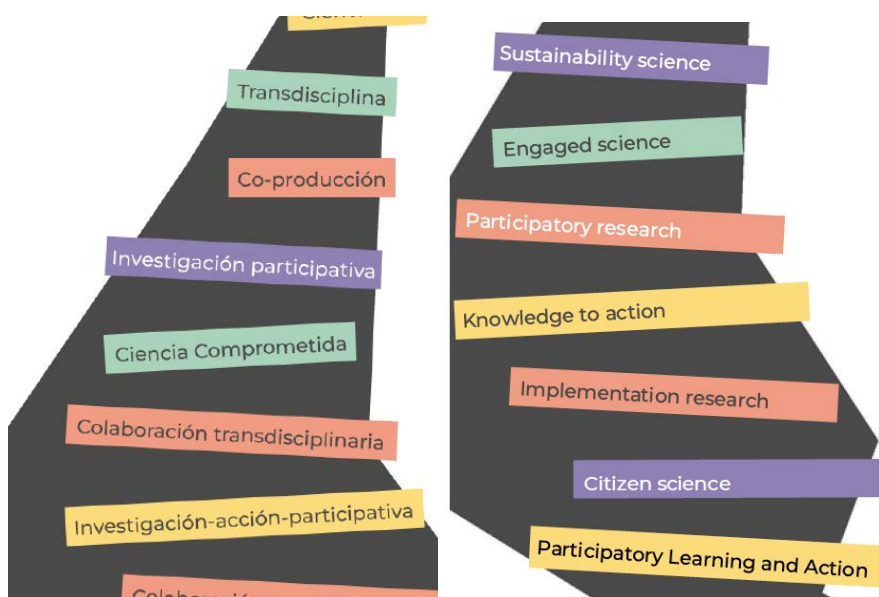


Advancing Engaged Research Globally — Region by Region: Assessing Training Needs

Final Summary Report With short summaries of all regional workshops



March 2025

Margaret Krebs and Ulli Vilsmaier

Executive Summary

The "Advancing Engaged Research Globally — Region by Region: Assessing Training Needs" report presents findings from five regional workshops initiated by the Transdisciplinary Training Collaboratory and the Global Alliance for Inter- and Transdisciplinarity (ITD Alliance). These workshops aimed to evaluate the training needs for engaged research (an umbrella term used to encompass transdisciplinary research and neighboring approaches) across Latin America and the Caribbean; Sub-Saharan Africa; Europe, including Turkey and Russia; Asia; and the combined regions of the United States, Canada, and Australia/New Zealand.

The primary objective of these workshops was to identify and understand regional differences and similarities in training needs, identify key organizations, and propose actionable recommendations to enhance the practice of transdisciplinary research. The workshops included diverse participants such as researchers, educators, policymakers, stakeholders, and community representatives, and followed a structured agenda involving plenary discussions, breakout sessions, and surveys.

Key insights from the workshops include:

- **Recognition of engaged research approaches:** There is a consensus across world regions on the need to promote and integrate engaged research within academic and research institutions to effectively address complex societal challenges.
- **Coordination and collaboration:** Developing collaborative structures that foster relationships across disciplines and sectors is vital. This includes formal networks on different scales and professional associations.
- **Training and capacity building:** Comprehensive training programs are essential to equip various groups with necessary skills for engaged research. This should encompass diverse educational levels and continuous professional development.
- **Involvement of diverse actors:** A wide range of societal actors, including researchers, policymakers, community members, NGOs, and funding bodies, need to be actively involved to ensure multiple perspectives are considered in all phases of a research process.
- **Conceptual pluralism:** The conceptual vocabulary for engaged research is diverse and differs between world regions which is important to be taken into consideration to maintain visibility for all sorts of engaged research approaches and to avoid conceptual domination.
- **Securing funding and resources:** Stable funding and resources are critical for sustaining transdisciplinary initiatives, facilitating coordination, and providing necessary training.

Distinct regional priorities were also identified, with Latin America and the Caribbean emphasizing context-specific challenges, Sub-Saharan Africa focusing on infrastructure and training networks, Europe improving collaboration between researchers and practitioners in training and implementation, Asia aiming for sustainable programs through local partnerships, and US, Canada and Australia/New Zealand advocating for increased resources and awareness.

1. Introduction

Drivers for the workshop series

Research that fosters collaboration between researchers and societal actors to address and develop solutions for complex problems is gaining significance in various communities and regions worldwide. There is widespread consensus in both political and academic circles that the growing complexity of these problems necessitates rethinking the relationships between academic and scientific institutions and different societal sectors and communities.

The workshop series aims to identify global training needs to support the ongoing expansion of engaged research. This initiative acknowledges that different world regions have cultivated unique approaches, each with its specific terminology, esteemed practitioners, theoretical foundations, and culturally appropriate practices. Consequently, these differences translate into diverse training requirements.

Objectives of workshop

The aim of the workshops in different world regions was to learn more about the status of training in the regions by getting input on dimensions, such as:

- the terms-in-use to describe “transdisciplinarity” and “socially engaged research”
- the organizations that are associated with the practice (universities, networks, professional organizations, international NGOs, etc.)
- the people who do training, how they describe what they do, and the quality of the training
- the type of training currently funded in the region
- who/what are the influencing agencies/organizations

Regions

To define the regional scopes and boundaries of regions we considered a series of criteria that would make collaboration in a workshop meaningful, including, for instance, language, time-zones and existing network organizations. We encountered difficulties in delimiting Europe due to the geopolitical conflict/war in the east. We ended up using the United Nations geoscheme as an orientation in defining the regional scope of the workshop with deviations in Northern Africa, Europe, Western and Southern Asia by grouping the MENA Region and Iran (4) and Turkey and the Caucasus region with Europe (3) as common in other classifications. The classification did not follow political motifs in any respect. We called for workshop coordinators for the following regions:



South America, Central America (including Mexico) and the Caribbean (short: *Latin America*) (1)

US, Canada and Australia/New Zealand (2)

Europe (including Turkey and the Caucasus Region) and Russia (short: *Europe*) (3)

MENA Region (Middle East-North Africa) and Iran (4, *not implemented*)

Sub-Saharan Africa (5)

Central and Southern Asia (6 *not implemented*)

Eastern Asia (including Mongolia) and Southeast Asia (short: *Asia*) (7)

Fig: Division of world regions to assess TD training needs.

No regional coordinators were found for regions 4 and 6. Consequently, some people from these regions were invited to workshops in regions 5 and 7, but no insights were gained for these regions.

Convening institutions and individuals

The regional workshop series was initiated by the Transdisciplinary (TD) Training Collaboratory, a global consortium of leading TD scholars/thought leaders and practitioners along with trainers, with funding from the US National Science Foundation. It was conducted in collaboration with the Global Alliance for Inter- and Transdisciplinarity (ITD Alliance), a membership-based association that connects diverse, distributed networks of institutions and individuals around the world to foster inter- and transdisciplinarity. Margaret Krebs represented the TD Training Collaboratory and selected Ulli Vilsmaier from applicants who were reviewed and screened by the Leadership Board of the ITD Alliance.

Workshop coordinators

Regional workshops were coordinated by experienced and strongly networked persons. They were selected based on a call first to members of the TD Training Collaboratory (which resulted in Connie Nshemereirwe being selected) and then a call to members of the ITD Alliance.

Latin America (region 1): Ana Corbacho and Mariana Pereyra, Interdisciplinary Space, Universidad de la República, Uruguay

US, Canada & Australia/New Zealand (region 2): Jacqueline Melvold, University of Arizona, USA and the University of Technology, Sydney, Australia

Europe (region 3): Varvara Nikulina, Blekinge Institute of Technology, Sweden

Sub-Saharan Africa (region 5): Connie Nshemereirwe, Africa Science Leadership Program, Uganda

Asia (region 7): Ria Lambino, Research Institute for Humanity and Nature, Japan

Identification of potential workshop participants and invitations

Regional coordinators were chosen based on a specific set of criteria, with a strong emphasis on the robustness of their regional networks. Workshop coordinators leveraged their professional networks and utilized targeted online search methods, along with snowball sampling, to identify relevant individuals and institutions, especially for areas where their own networks had gaps. Additionally, representatives from the TD Training Collaboratory and the ITD Alliance contributed to the list of potential invitees. In regions with a high number of potential participants, such as Europe and Latin America, a selection process was implemented.

The selection criteria for workshop participants included their relationship to the training subject, their country within the region, and their roles (e.g., academics, funders, policymakers). Invitations were developed collaboratively between the regional workshop coordinators and the conveners, Ulli and Margaret. While there was flexibility in the design of the invitations, the coordinators met and agreed upon the workshop questions. Coordinators were given a detailed list of information that needed to be included in the invitations.

Invitations were primarily sent via email, and in some cases, key participants were consulted to coordinate suitable dates. Registration was mandatory for all workshops and sometimes included data collection about participants and their associated institutions. Furthermore, the workshop dates were promoted through the ITD Alliance newsletter and news bulletin.

Methodology

Each workshop followed a similar structure, involving plenary questions, breakout room discussions, and surveys. Workshop coordinators, together with the convenors elaborated questions and structure jointly. In principle, all used the same questions. However, to take language, cultural differences between world regions, and individual facilitation styles into consideration, adaptations and slight deviations of the common structure and wording were possible. This enabled the creation of adequate dialogue spaces, considering slight limitations in the comparability between regions. The data collected from these sessions were analyzed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of training and to propose actionable recommendations. (See Appendix for the workshop agenda.)

Implementation and participation

The five regional workshops were conducted online between October and December 2024. Three regions offered two parallel sessions, and one offered three to augment participation. In addition, participation via a survey was possible for interested persons who could not attend. The participant composition varied, but included scholars, funders, educators, trainers, administrators, and curriculum developers. The most represented group across workshops were researchers, followed by trainers and educators.

Region	# of participants	Details
Latin America	40	From 8 countries, greatest numbers Mexico & Chile
US, Canada & Australia/New Zealand	26	From 4 countries
Europe	57	From 16 countries
Sub-Saharan Africa	36	From 10 countries
Asia	19	From 7 countries, including region 6

2. Summary of regional workshops: Results

The regional workshop summary results are in the following order: 1) insights related to terminology, 2) the existing training landscape, 3) training delivery, 4) synthesis of common themes and findings, 5) distinct demands from different world regions, and 6) a conclusion including recommendations for future action related to training in engaged research.

Conceptual pluralism

Word clouds were developed by participants in each region using Mentimeter to get a quick overview of usage within the region. (*What word or phrase do you use to describe an approach that enables collaboration among researchers and societal actors to frame and develop solutions?*)

Below are the top three terms from each region:

Latin America: (participatory) action (research) & collaborative action (research), participatory & collaborative research, co-design & co-construction & co-creation

US, Canada & Australia/New Zealand: transdisciplinary, co-creation, action research

Europe: transdisciplinary, co-creation, co-production

Sub-Saharan Africa: participatory research, collaboration, transdisciplinary

Asia: transdisciplinarity, co-creation, interdisciplinary

Existing training landscape according to region

Latin America: Universities are the primary providers of training, with government agencies providing support in some cases. Mexico stands out with the most significant development in training and research, focusing on inter- and transdisciplinary approaches.

USA, Canada, Australia/New Zealand: Within the regions, TD is gaining traction, particularly in the space of higher education where across all four countries there are bespoke programs that center on interdisciplinarity and TD undergraduate and postgraduate training. There is a desire for TD training that extends beyond postgraduate courses to early- and mid-career academics.

Europe: A wide variety of training at different academic levels is provided by universities and NGOs from courses and modules to MOOCs, provided primarily by universities and NGOs. In contrast, there are countries with no specific offerings, like Lithuania, Turkey, and Ukraine

Sub-Saharan Africa: Although the awareness of transdisciplinary research is increasing, practical training is limited and often linked to specific projects

Asia: Professional training covers a broad range of skills such as science-policy communication, publication development whereas structured TD-specific training is still developing.

Training delivery according to regions

We asked participants to describe how content was delivered, proposing the following categories: Lecture with Q&A; An interactive, participative, and experiential format; Lecture only; Discussion question.

Clear differences could be identified across regions, indicating potential cultural differences in academic and educational practice. From Latin American participants, a vast majority prioritized an interactive, participative and experimental format followed by lecture and Q&A. Interactive formats were listed first in the workshops of region 2 (US, Canada & Australia/New Zealand). Results from the workshops in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia show close numbers of lecture with Q&A and interactive, participative, and experimental format as highest ranked categories. Results of the workshop in region 3 (Europe) show close numbers between lecture with Q&A, interactive formats and discussion questions.

Region	How content is delivered (Highest)	How content is delivered (2nd)
Latin America	Interactive, participative formats	Lecture with Q&A
US, Canada & Australia/New Zealand	Interactive, participative formats	Lecture with Q&A
Europe	Lecture with Q&A	Interactive, participative formats
Sub-Saharan Africa	Lecture with Q&A	Interactive, participative formats
Asia	Lecture with Q&A	Interactive, participative formats

Organizations that might be key to leading efforts according to regions

Region	
Latin America	ENLACE – Encuentro Latinoamericano y del Caribe sobre Investigación y Educación Superior Interdisciplinaria
US, Canada & Australia/New Zealand	Professional organizations such as Ecological Society of America and American Geophysical Union; New branch formation of ITD Alliance into North America
Europe	ITD Alliance
Sub-Saharan Africa	Africa Science Leadership Programme and Inclusive Innovation
Asia	Future Earth and Association of Research Councils of Asia

Common themes and insights

Across all regions, several recurring themes and insights emerged from the workshops, indicating similar perceptions across world regions on the importance and challenges of advancing engaged research training. These insights are shared below:

- 1. Need for recognition and integration of engaged research approaches:** Across all regions, there is a recognized need to promote and integrate engaged research within academic and research institutions. This integration involves increasing awareness and acknowledgment of the value of this kind of research in addressing complex societal problems.
- 2. Importance of coordination in networks:** Collaboration between existing institutions emerged as a vital component in all regions. Whether through formal networks, professional associations, or informal connections, the development of collaborative structures that foster cross-disciplinary and cross-sector communication and cooperation is a widely shared idea.
- 3. Focus on training and capacity building:** There is a universal emphasis on the need for comprehensive training programs to equip researchers, research administrators, educators, funders and societal actors with the skills necessary for conducting engaged research. This

includes training at various educational levels, from undergraduate to postgraduate, and continuous professional development for early career, established researchers and research collaborators from different sectors and communities, including policy makers/decision makers.

4. Involvement of diverse actors: All regions emphasize the necessity of involving a wide range of societal actors in engaged research, including researchers, policymakers, community members, NGOs, and funding bodies. This inclusive approach ensures that multiple perspectives are considered in all phases: co-design, co-production, co-implementation.

5. Conceptual work and clarification: Terminology has been an issue in all workshops as results to the question on terms or phrases used to an approach that enable collaboration among researchers and societal actors to frame and develop solutions has shown a huge conceptual variety in each workshop.

6. Securing funding and resources: The need for stable funding and resources to support engaged research initiatives is a common theme. Funding is crucial not only for carrying out research but also for providing the necessary coordination, training and establishing sustainable programs.

Differences across regions: Key priorities for future development

Latin America:

A key topic is the importance of focusing on the context and challenges specific to the global south and understanding how the global south needs are different than the global north.

Europe:

Although there are a lot of training opportunities in Europe for transdisciplinary research, there are areas of Europe that do not have access to these opportunities. Also, a need for improved collaboration between researchers and practitioners both in training for and implementation of transdisciplinary research was identified.

Sub-Saharan Africa:

Strengthen ties with non-academic communities by building synergistic collaborations and start training young people at an early stage with tailored programs for early career researchers. Also, the required infrastructure to support engaged research is considered a top priority.

US, Canada & Australia/New Zealand The two regions grouped in workshop 2—Australia/New Zealand and USA/Canada—are distinctly different. In the US and Canada there is a need for more awareness whereas in Australia/New Zealand there is much more awareness of the approach and networks, but both need more resources.

Asia:

Engaging local NGOs, universities, and research councils to create sustainable TD programs was recommended to improve partnerships between researchers, policymakers, stakeholders and communities.

3. Conclusion

The workshop results provide evidence of a clear and consistent need for enhancing training in engaged research across the globe. The need for coordination and collaboration across regions and within regions

is clear. This starts with proactively dealing with conceptual pluralism. For example, there is no common term for approaches that enable collaboration among researchers and societal actors to frame and develop solutions. The results from the word clouds show that there isn't consistency either across regions or within regions. This impacts communication and coordination and even more critically the choice of search terms to identify current and past research.

The need for coordination across regions and coordination within regions is also highlighted by the reports. While there is a strong alignment in recognizing the importance of engaged research and the need for comprehensive training and collaborative networks, each region presents distinct approaches and priorities based on their unique contexts and current capabilities. By understanding these commonalities and differences, international efforts can be better tailored to support and enhance engaged research in diverse regional settings, ultimately contributing to more effective and inclusive solutions to global challenges.

By acknowledging and leveraging regional differences and commonalities, global efforts can be better aligned to support and enhance these research approaches. This is a collective endeavor that promises to foster more culturally sensitive, effective, and innovative solutions to pressing global challenges, ultimately contributing to the advancement of different types of engaged research on a global scale. The next steps involve continued dialogue across networks, targeted investments in training infrastructure, and a concerted effort to standardize terminologies and practices across regions for more streamlined and impactful collaborative research.

Appendix 1: Workshop agenda

This agenda was designed to facilitate comprehensive discussions and knowledge-sharing across various regions, helping to identify specific needs and opportunities for enhancing engaged research training initiatives globally. The agenda was designed for a one and one-half hour workshop.

Welcome and Introduction (15 minutes)

Introduction: Welcome participants, introduce workshop objectives and agenda.

Describe the importance of engaged research and its implications for the region.

Outline the interactive format and tools (e.g., Zoom, Mentimeter).

Understanding Terminologies and Practices (15 minutes)

Mentimeter Prompt: *“What word or phrase do you use to describe an approach that enables collaboration among researchers and societal actors to frame and develop solutions together for complex problems?”*

Discussion: Share results and discuss variations in terminology and practices across regions.

Exploring Current Training Landscapes (20 minutes)

Breakout Session: What is the current landscape of training?

- Discuss professional training topics and areas offered over the past five years.
- Examine delivery methods (workshops, online courses, in-person sessions).
- Share experiences with training specific to transdisciplinary and engaged research.

Envisioning Future Landscapes (20 minutes)

Suppose you had unlimited funding to provide TD training to any group in your region. Discuss and prioritize actions:

- What should be the top priorities to advance TD research?
- Who should be trained first and why?
- Who should conduct the training, and what specific skills are required?
- How long should the training last?

Note: The answers to these questions are integrated into the recommendations.

Plenary Discussion and Key Outcomes (10 minutes)

Each group presents a 1-minute summary of their discussion and key points.

Reflection: Request final reflections from participants about immediate actions and long-term strategies for advancing transdisciplinary research.

Recommendations and Next Steps (5 minutes)

Mentimeter Prompts:

- What actions do you recommend for building the field or advancing transdisciplinary research in our region?
- Are there specific organizations that should be leading this effort due to their influence or experience? Who are they, and why?
- Who else should be involved in building or strengthening transdisciplinary research training? Identify specific individuals or organizations.

Closing Remarks and Follow-Up (5 minutes)

Closing: Thank participants, share next steps, and provide information for staying connected.

Follow-Up: Promise to distribute a detailed report and invite further contributions through follow-up surveys.

Appendix 2: Consolidated list of invited universities, networks, and centers

International organizations (could attend any workshop)

- Future Earth
- ISC - International Science Council
- IAP - Inter-academy Partnership
- TWAS - The World Academy of Sciences
- World Bank
- EPIC-N (Educational Partnerships for Innovation in Communities-Network)
- **National Science Foundation (US – International office)**

Consultants and consulting organizations (could attend any workshop)

- Inclusive Innovation
- koforges -gmbh
- Responsive Research
- Susanne Moser Research and Consulting
- National Coalition for Deliberation and Dialogue (NCDD)

Latin America

Regional networks

- ENLACE - Encuentro Latinoamericano y del Caribe sobre Investigación y Educación Superior Interdisciplinaria
- Congreso Latinoamericano de Investigación y Educación Superior Interdisciplinaria
- Red de Investigación Participativa en América Latina
- Red Latinoamericana de PECS (Programa sobre Cambio Ecosistémico y Sociedad)
- ECOSUR (El Colegio del Sur) - Red de Investigación Colaborativa
- CAUCE - Observatorio Territorial para la Acción Hidrosocial
- Red de Innovación Transdisciplinaria - Red IT, Universidad de Talca, Chile
- Transdisciplina y sustentabilidad, Red de Socioecosistemas y Sustentabilidad
- Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research

Universities and organizations by country

Argentina

- Universidad Nacional Rosario
- Universidad Nacional de San Luis

Bolivia

- Universidad Privada Franz Tamayo

Brazil

- Universidade de São Paulo
- Universidad Federal de Rio Grande do Sul
- Universidade Federal de Pelotas

Chile

- Unidad de Transdisciplina, Redes e Interfaz - Redes VID Universidad de Chile
- Vértice UDP, Universidad Diego Portales, Chile
- Centro de Ciencia del Clima y la Resiliencia
- Nucleo de Estudios Sistémicos Transdisciplinarios

- Universidad del Desarrollo

Columbia

- Universidad de Santander
- Universidad del Tolima
- Universidad Nacional de Colombia

Costa Rica

- UNA Integra, Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica

Ecuador

- Universidad Politécnica Salesiana
- Universidad Nacional de Educación
- Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo

Guatemala

- Universidad Rafael Landívar

Mexico

- UMA
- UNAM, Mexico City and Moralia
- Universidad Veracruzana

Panama

- University of Panama

Peru

- Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú - PUCP.
- Universidad Nacional Santiago Antúnez de Mayolo

Uruguay

- Espacio Interdisciplinario, Universidad de la República
- Intendencia de Montevideo
- Universidad Tecnológica del Uruguay

USA, Canada, Australia/New Zealand

Universities and organizations by country

Australia

- University of Technology Sydney
- University of Melbourne

Canada

- University of Alberta
- University of Calgary

New Zealand

- AwhiWorld
- University of Auckland

United States

- Salisbury University
- University of Arizona
- University of Maine
- Franklin School
- Claremont Graduate University
- University of Michigan
- Yale University
- Virginia Tech University
- University of Guam

Europe

Universities and organizations by country

Albania

- European University of Tirana
- New York University in Tirana

Austria

- University of Graz

Czech Republic

- Anglo American University
- CzechGlobe

Georgia

- Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia

Germany

- Bonn University
- GTPF
- IHK
- Leuphana
- Potsdam institute for climate impact research
- tdAcademy
- University of Freiburg

Iceland

- [INNEN](#)

Italy

- University of Padua

Lithuania

- Faculty of Creative Industries at Vilnius Gediminas Technical University
- Klaipeda University

Netherlands

- Erasmus School of Social and Behavioural Sciences (ESSB)
- Erasmus University Rotterdam
- TU Delft

- Utrecht University

Norway

- University of Bergen
- University of Oslo
- University of Stavanger
- University of Stavanger; university of Bergen

Portugal

- University of Lisbon

Russia

- Institute of Transdisciplinary Technologies

Sweden

- Blekinge Institute of Technology
- Chalmers University of Technology
- Göteborgs Stad
- Gothenburg University
- Länska Consulting
- Linköping University
- Lund University
- Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
- Uppsala University

Switzerland

- ETH - Zurich
- TD-Net
- University of Basel

United Kingdom

- Interdisciplinary Centre of the Social Sciences (ICOSS), University of Sheffield
- Keele University
- [Royal Holloway University of London](#)
- [University of Hull](#)
- University of Oxford

Ukraine

- Kyiv School of Economic (KSE)

Sub-Saharan Africa

Regional Networks

- The Nature Conservancy, Africa
- Future Africa

Universities and organizations by country

Cameroon

- University of Yaounde 1
- Institute of Medical Research and Medicinal Plants Studies

Egypt

- Addis Ababa University
- Faculty of Agriculture, Cairo University

Ghana

- Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology
- The University of Education, Winneba
- CSIR-Water Research Institute

Kenya

- Moi University
- Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology
- Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology

Lagos

- University of Lagos

Madagascar

- University of Antananarivo

Nigeria

- Redeemer University
- A. P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute (APLORI) Jos Nigeria
- University of Ibadan

South Africa

- University of Pretoria
- Kruger2Canyons Biosphere Region
- Stellenbosch University
- University of Cape Coast
- University of Venda
- Foundation for Women's Health Promotion and Welfare Initiatives
- The South African Institute for Aquatic Biodiversity, Rhodes University
- Human Sciences Research Council, Pretoria

Asia

Regional networks

- Asia Pacific Network for Global Change Research
- Association of Research Councils of Asia
- ICIMOD/Himalayan University Coalition

Universities and organizations by country

China

- Tzu Chi Foundation
- Shanghai Academy of Agricultural Sciences
- Sun Yat Sen University

India

- Indian Institute of Human Settlements

- Nayanta Education Foundation
- Divecha Centre for Climate Change, Indian Institute of Science

Indonesia

- Universitas Hasanuddin

Korea

- Seoul National University Asia Center

Japan

- Doshisha University
- Hokkaido University
- Kyoto University
- Kyoto Prefectural University
- Research Institute for Humanity and Nature

Malaysia

- Institute for Advanced Studies
- University Putra Malaysia National Science and Technology Development Agency

Mongolia

- Mongolia Academy of Science

Philippines

- University of the Philippines School of Environmental Science and Management
- Ateneo de Manila University

Thailand

- Chiang Mai University School of Public Policy
- Prince of Songkla University
- Thammasat University
- Udon Thani Rajabhat University

Taiwan

- Academia Sinica
- Future Earth Taipei

Appendix 3: Short summaries of regional workshops

- Latin America
- USA, Canada, Australia/New Zealand
- Europe
- Sub-Saharan Africa
- Asia

Advancing Engaged Research Globally — Region by Region Assessing Training Needs

Short Summary of Regional Workshop: *Latin America*

29 and 31 October, online

Coordinator: Ana Corbacho and Mariana Pereyra, Interdisciplinary Space, Udelar

Background

This workshop has been initiated by the Td Training Collaboratory and the ITD Alliance and created a space to explore the need for training collaborative, engaged research from different perspectives, involving scholars, funders, educators, and trainers, administrators, researchers and curriculum developers. It explored the status of training in Latin America, including existing offers and organizations providing these types of training, and current demands, and asked participants to elaborate on desired futures and recommendations related to training to strengthen collaborative, engaged research. Two parallel sessions were held on 29 and 31 October, following the same objectives and workshop structure, including plenary questions and break-out room discussions. This summary includes the outcomes of both sessions.

The data collected provides insights for future funding of training and trainers of collaborative, engaged research. In addition, it will serve as an orientation for a newly forming working group of the ITD Alliance on education and training.

In the Latin America workshop, 40 individuals participated, primarily from Mexico, with a smaller representation from Chile. Most of the participants were researchers, followed by trainers and educators. However, there were no representatives from policymakers. The participants were mainly affiliated with universities, followed by research centers.

Results

To do justice to the heterogeneity of language used to name collaborative, engaged research, participants presented words or phrases used to describe an approach that enables collaboration among researchers and societal actors to frame and develop solutions together and focus on complex problems (Figure 1).

What word(s) or phrase(s) do you use to describe collaboration between researchers and stakeholders to address complex problems?

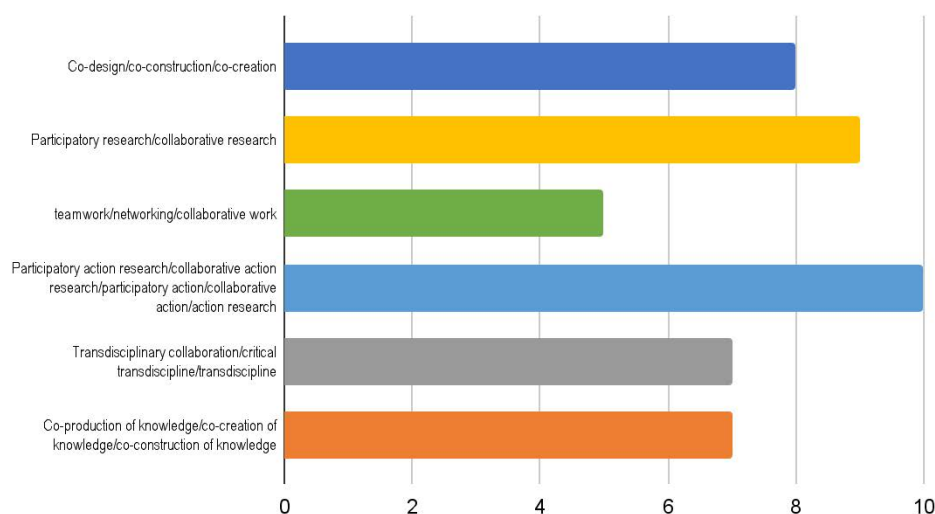


Figure 1. Frequencies of the words and phrases mentioned in both workshops and the online survey.

What exists:

In the region, opportunities for professional development and training are mainly focused on universities and secondarily on government institutions. Training ranges from workshops and courses to postgraduate training. In the region, many initiatives are driven mainly by universities developed through projects that focus on addressing complex problems based on the needs of non-academic actors (communities). Mexico has the most significant development in training, research, systematization of experiences, and work in communities of inter- and transdisciplinarity. In recent years, government funding agencies in some countries in the region have allocated funds for developing projects that include training for academic staff and creating programs within universities focused on inter and transdisciplinarity.

What could be:

From the workshops, the key priorities that emerged are: i) focus on the context and challenges of the global south, ii) build collaborative networks and iii) strengthen capacities and leadership. The training priorities focused on creating inclusive and diverse processes, methodologies, evaluations, and community learning initiatives. The target population for the training was categorized into four groups: social and community actors, academic and educational stakeholders, university managers, and individuals responsible for university policies. To implement the training, local experts, community promoters, trainers, academics, and teams composed of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary experts were identified as key participants. Various methodologies, strategies, and formats for training were proposed to ensure engagement and effectiveness.

What actions do you recommend for building the field or advancing collaborative, engaged research in our region? What are the highest priorities from your perspective?

Consolidate the Enlace network and bring together the various initiatives within the region. Establish workgroups that facilitate the systematization of experiences and the development of regional theoretical frameworks that incorporate all perspectives. Throughout the workshop and via the online form, we noted the rich variety of expressions in the region that align with transdisciplinarity. It is crucial to hold webinar meetings to

exchange experiences and foster mutual learning among different groups. Most importantly, training is essential to develop teams of educators and trainers who will prepare future generations.

Are there specific organizations that should be leading this effort, due to their influence or experience? Please comment why you feel they should lead.

In the region, there is not a single institution, but rather a group of institutions that have been working together since 2016 to promote the development of inter- and transdisciplinarity at the level of training and research in Latin America. These institutions are grouped in the Enlace network. They are in charge of organizing the Latin American Congress on Interdisciplinary Research and Higher Education, which takes place every two years in a country in the region.

Who else should be involved in building or strengthening collaborative, engaged research training?

Those responsible for developing policies within educational institutions and government funding agencies wield the power to ensure the long-term sustainability of inter- and transdisciplinary development. Often, there is an initial push for such initiatives, but this momentum is not maintained over time. As a result, funding eventually ceases, leading to the termination of projects and training programs. It is important to note that it takes about ten years to establish inter- and transdisciplinary research groups and to build a team of experts in the field.

Responsible organizations:

The workshop series was initiated by the Td Training Collaboratory, a global consortium of leading scholars/thought leaders and practitioners in transdisciplinary research, formed to identify key elements of what researchers need to know, do and be in the context of transdisciplinary research and to create materials for trainers. It was conducted in collaboration with the the Global Alliance for Inter- and Transdisciplinarity (ITD Alliance), a membership-based association that connects diverse, distributed networks of institutions and individuals around the world to foster inter- and transdisciplinarity. For more information see: www.itd-alliance.org.

Regional coordinator:

Ana Corbacho and Mariana Pereyra are part of the Interdisciplinary Space at the University of the Republic in Uruguay. Both have extensive experience in professional development and training teachers at both the university and secondary education levels, with a focus on inter- and transdisciplinary teaching. They conduct research on complex problem-solving approaches using active methodologies and teamwork.

Advancing Engaged Research Globally — Region by Region Assessing Training Needs

Short Summary of Australia, New Zealand, the USA and Canada

Coordinator: Jacqueline Melvold, University of Arizona

Background

This workshop has been initiated by the TD Training Collaboratory and the Global Alliance for Inter- and Transdisciplinarity (ITD Alliance) and created a space to explore the needs for training collaborative, engaged research from different perspectives, involving scholars, policy makers, funders, educators and trainers. It explored the status of training in Australia, New Zealand, the USA and Canada, including existing offers and organizations providing these types of training and current demands and asked participants to elaborate on desired futures and recommendations related to training to strengthen collaborative, engaged research. Three sessions were held on the 14th, 19th and 20th November 2024 following the same objectives and workshop structure, including plenary questions and break-out room discussions. This summary includes outcomes of both sessions.

The data collected provides insights for future funding of training and trainers of collaborative, engaged research. In addition, it will serve as an orientation for a newly forming working group of the ITD Alliance on education and training.

Participants

In total, 112 participants were invited to attend a workshop, 57 RSVPed and 28 people attended a workshop in the three workshops (50.9% RSVP rate and 25% attendance rate). The majority of people who attended were from the USA (54%) and Australia (25%). The most common role of those who attended were from universities and worked as academics in research and teaching and learning roles (82%), while the most challenging role to get attendance from were representatives from funding bodies.

Results

To do justice to the heterogeneity of language used to name collaborative, engaged research, participants presented words or phrases used to describe an approach that enables collaboration among researchers and societal actors to frame and develop solutions together and focus on complex problems. Despite a variety of terms used, the most common was transdisciplinarity (TD), followed by co-creation and action research.



What currently exists:

Within the region, TD is gaining traction, particularly in the space of higher education where across all four countries there are bespoke programs that center of ID and TD undergraduate and postgraduate training. There is a desire for TD training to begin earlier (in K-12 schools) and extend beyond postgraduate courses to early- and mid-career academics, as well as reach out into government and community organizations.

What could be:

The overarching vision for TD training is for it to become a cornerstone of education, research, and community engagement. This evolution will be driven by a collective realization that the complex challenges of our time—climate change, global health crises, and social inequality—could not be addressed within the confines of siloed disciplines. The journey to this future was fueled by bold reimagining of education, communication, and systemic change that is shaped by four key priorities: the role of influential organizations, fostering cross-sector collaboration, building new structures and networks that enhance the coordination and integration of transdisciplinary organizations, and embracing community-led approaches.

What actions do you recommend for building the field or advancing collaborative, engaged research in our region? What are the highest priorities from your perspective?

The key recommendations for advancing transdisciplinary research in the region are organized into seven priority areas: faculty development and support, student engagement and early integration, funding and resource allocation, community building and networking, awareness, communication, and standardization, strategic planning and cohesion, and expanding the scope.

Are there specific organizations that should be leading this effort, due to their influence or experience?

Whilst many different organizations were named, they fell under the categories of key organizations with influence and experience (namely scientific societies and organizations, academic publishers, high education societies and global organizations), policy makers and funders, new and existing ID and TD organizations, like the ITD Alliance, and community organizations.

Who else should be involved in building or strengthening collaborative, engaged research training?

Building and strengthening transdisciplinary training in the region involves engaging diverse target audiences across academia, policymakers, non-academic communities, the private sector, and media; expanding collaboration beyond academia by integrating diverse perspectives and fostering ethical partnerships; ensuring cultural and organizational alignment through effective frameworks and support systems; and providing practical tools and resources tailored to the needs of early-career faculty, practitioners, policymakers, and community leaders. Several specific organizations were named, and several people were nominated, including commonly underrepresented groups, such as indigenous communities. Worth noting, was the call for TD projects to start more within communities and invite academic knowledges in, as opposed to academic communities always being the driver of TD projects.

Responsible organizations: The workshop series was initiated by the Td Training Collaboratory, a global consortium of leading scholars/thought leaders and practitioners in transdisciplinary research, formed to identify key elements of what researchers need to know, do and be in the context of transdisciplinary research and to create materials for trainers. It was conducted in collaboration with the [ITD Alliance](#), a membership-based association that connects diverse, distributed networks of institutions and individuals around the world to foster inter- and transdisciplinarity.

Regional coordinator: Dr Jacqueline Melvold is an Associate Professor of Practice and the Compton Chair of Creative Intelligence and Innovation at the W.A. Franke Honors College within the University of Arizona.

What exists:

A wide variety of training is offered on transdisciplinary research. It is offered at the bachelor's, master's and PhD levels. The training is offered as modules/lectures in the courses, entire courses, summer/winter schools, and a MOOC. The training is conducted by universities, university-based organizations and initiatives, and NGOs. It was reported that no training is offered in Lithuania, Turkey and Ukraine. Some examples of organizations that provide transdisciplinary training are TD net (Switzerland), tdAcademy (Germany), OULU (Finland), Wexsus (Sweden), and cChange (Norway). In terms of content, trainings are offered on the broad topics of running transdisciplinary projects, transdisciplinary research approach, and methods within transdisciplinarity.

What could be:

Participants of the study recommended training first people working at Higher Education Institutions (students, PhDs, researchers), practitioners (coordinators, city administrators, NGOs), policymakers and funding agencies, and societal actors (civil society, community partners, international groups of people). There are some suggestions on how training for transdisciplinarity could be done (e.g., as part of the university curricula, through informal spaces, and by using games) and what topics could be covered (e.g., meta course on TD, the concept of engaged research, inter-generational climate leadership). Overall, it was suggested to hire experienced researchers and trainers with a set of knowledge (defined to some degree). Some participants did not know who could do the training. The suggestions about the length of the training were diverse: from several hours to several months, one time and ongoing, in conjunction with a project and not.

What actions do you recommend for building the field or advancing collaborative, engaged research in our region? What are the highest priorities from your perspective?

Even though a lot of TD education and training is available in Europe, there is an expressed need to create recognition of TD, build collaborative networks, and develop resources for engaged research. Moreover, there is a need to develop funding schemes for TD research, TD positions and opportunities for TD-dedicated publishing.

Are there specific organizations that should be leading this effort, due to their influence or experience? Please comment why you feel they should lead.

Many organizations were mentioned that should lead the advancement of the transdisciplinary field. The top three suggestions are universities (35 %), funding agencies (18 %) and the ITD Alliance (9 %). Some participants suggested that there should not be leadership but collaboration only.

Who else should be involved in building or strengthening collaborative, engaged research training?

Several specific organizations were named, and several people were nominated. There were also broader groups of people mentioned. It is worth noting that underrepresented perspectives came up in various forms: migrants, poor people, indigenous communities, informal settlements, and nature and non-human actors.

Responsible organizations:

The workshop series was initiated by the Td Training Collaboratory, a global consortium of leading scholars/thought leaders and practitioners in transdisciplinary research, formed to identify key elements of what researchers need to know, do and be in the context of transdisciplinary research and to create materials for trainers. It was conducted in collaboration with the Global Alliance for Inter- and Transdisciplinarity (ITD Alliance), a membership-based association that connects diverse, distributed networks of institutions and individuals worldwide to foster inter- and transdisciplinarity. For more information, see: www.itd-alliance.org.

Regional coordinator:

Dr. Varvara Nikulina, Blekinge Institute of Technology, Sweden: trainer, facilitator, researcher and lecturer in transdisciplinary research and knowledge co-production, strategic participatory planning and governance of socio-technical transitions towards sustainability, education for sustainable development and transformative learning.

Advancing Engaged Research Globally – Region by Region Assessing Training Needs

A summary of the outcomes of the Sub-Saharan Regional Workshops

15th October & 17th October, 2024

Coordinator: Connie Nshemereirwe; Future Africa, University of Pretoria

10th December, 2025

Preamble

This is a report on two online workshops held to assess what would be needed in designing and delivering training in Engaged Research in the Sub-Saharan Region. The aim of these workshops was to learn more about the status of training in the region by getting input on dimensions, such as:

- the terms-in-use to describe “transdisciplinarity”
- the organizations that are associated with the practice (universities, networks, professional organizations, international NGOs, etc.)
- the people who do training, how they describe what they do, and the quality of the training
- the type of training currently funded in the region
- who/what are the influencing agencies/organizations

This was an initiative of the Transdisciplinary Collaboratory, and similar workshops were carried out in other regions of the globe to determine the extent to which contextual factors might impact training design

The Workshops

The Training Needs Assessment was carried out over two 90-minute online sessions/workshops held on 15th and 17th October, starting at 13.00 UTC. The language of engagement was English, and they were co-facilitated by Dr. Connie Nshemereirwe from the Africa Science Leadership Programme at the University of Pretoria, and Dr. Leshi Oluwatosin from the University of Kentucky; both facilitators are also part of the Inclusive Innovation, which is a global network of training facilitators using creative problem solving approaches in the global south.

Broad Agenda:

- 13:45 Meeting Room Opens
- 14:00 Introductions and Workshop Objectives
- 14:15 Terminology and practices
- 14:30 Breakout Part I: What is [the state of training for Engaged Research]?
- 14:50 Breakout Part II: What could be?
- 15:15 Final reflections & next steps
- 15:30 Close

Workshop I – 15th October, 2024

- Breakout 1 Moderator - Justine Nzweundji
- Breakout 2 Moderator - Tuyeni Mwampamba
- Breakout 3 Moderator - Eunice Kamaara
- Breakout 4 Moderator – Priscilla Mante

Workshop 2 – 17th October, 2024

- Breakout 1 Moderator – Onja Razanamaro
- Breakout 2 Moderator – Annette Okoth
- Breakout 3 Moderator – Lydia Mosi

Participants:

Following a call for participants, we received interest from almost 80 individuals, out of which 36 attended one of the two workshops. Participants were from 10 African countries, and more than half were from universities and research institutions; the rest worked at research councils, training institutes, and NGOs.

Results: Terminologies and practices

Participants were invited to respond to this Mentimeter prompt: *What WORD or PHRASE do you use to describe an approach that: Enables collaboration among researchers and societal actors to frame and develop solution*

Responses are summarized in the word clouds below:

Workshop 1



Workshop 2



From these responses it is clear that there is still a wide range of terminology used to refer to Engaged research, and this has to be taken into account in communication and engagement with the wider community of practice in Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as engagement between communities across the globe.

Results: What is the state of [training for] Engaged Research?

The participants observed that awareness of Transdisciplinary Research Methodologies is slowly spreading across their institutions, with some of them still grappling with inter- & multi-disciplinary approaches to start, and others in transition from these to TD. A few participants considered the TD Collab Workshop itself as already more than anything they had experienced with regard to TD training, while others mentioned they had attended the Training of Trainers workshop offered by the TD Collab at Future Africa in June 2024 as having been a big eye-opener for them.

Beyond that, a number of participants observed that there was almost no emphasis on equipping staff on Transdisciplinary or other engaged research approaches, although there were instances when they were required to commit to implementing these approaches as part of collaborations with other universities or as a requirement for funding applications, without the necessary orientation or experience. Many simply then learnt as they went, and underwent some training at the launch of these projects.

Results: Priority actions to advance Engaged Research

1. **“Catch them young”:** Tailored programmes targeting researchers at the start of their research career to present TD as one of the many approaches to research open to them
2. **Training of Trainers (ToTs):** raising a strong force of trainers as a resource for the many institutions that still lack the capacity to train their staff
3. **Support and Incentives:** These are still strongly skewed towards mainstream approaches, and more awareness and advocacy is still needed to create the structures and incentives to allow TD Research to grow
4. **Strengthen ties with non-academic communities:** through identification of common research concerns, public talks and other engagement, to expose the academic to the non-academic and build synergistic collaborations
5. **Encourage collaborations with TD-strong institutions:** learn from those within the community that have already made strides in engaged research

Results: Groups that should be trained first and why

- **Researchers:** since it is them to carry out the research and reach out to policy makers and other non-academic populations; particular attention should be paid to early-career researchers who have a longer research career ahead of them
- **Policy makers/decision makers** - the implementers should be involved so that they can appreciate the benefit to them in jointly diagnosing societal challenge and also identifying solutions
- **Recent graduates/postgraduates:** Engaged research approaches should get equal airtime with other more mainstream methodologies and approaches in the training of researchers
- **Funders:** in the hope of creating more space and incentives for engaged research, and to help them understand the big differences between engaged research and other approaches.
- **Research Administrators:** they are in charge of providing training, fostering partnerships, controlling funds, showcasing available research and its relevance to attract funding and partnerships.
- **Community members/NGOs/Civil Society:** to promote equal and active participation and ensure sustainable impact

Results: Who could be hired to carry out the training?

1. **The ITD Alliance:** given their long experience offering TD Training and wide network of resource people,
2. **The Africa Science Leadership Programme (ASLP) Facilitators:** the collaborative and creative problem solving approaches that characterise the ASLP training, with its many satellite “SLPs” in various African countries and trained facilitators are a fertile resource for further training in Engaged Research approaches, and many of them are TD researchers already.
3. **Identified local networks and consortia of TD researchers:** e.g. LIRA
4. **Newly trained Trainers of Trainers:** The ToT offered by the TD Collab at Future Africa in June 2024 was identified as a promising vehicle to build training capacity
5. **Access to opportunities to learn “on the job”:** this might be through pairing researchers with experienced TD practitioners, collaborative research projects, etc.

Results: Recommended actions towards advancing the field of Engaged Research

1. **Awareness Raising:** Most of the recommendations for action were around raising more awareness about Engaged/Transdisciplinary Research as an approach, both for academics and for non-academics by highlighting the benefits presented with regard to jointly understanding and tackling complex societal challenges
2. **Integrating TD training at undergraduate and graduate levels**
3. **Targeted training for academics and university administrators**
4. **Funding Support:** engagement with funding bodies so they can better understand how TD differs from more “traditional” approaches; additionally, funding for TD training
5. **Establish/build on continental platforms:** connect TD researchers across the continent by inviting them to join existing networks, organising conferences to disseminate TD Research findings, offer mentorship etc.
6. **Strengthen connections with non-academic actors:** universities in general are not well-connected with relevant stakeholders, which is necessary for any TD research to even start, and may be an avenue to create mutually beneficial collaborations

In summary, the workshops were highly interactive and informative, and participants reported that they also learnt a lot from one another. There were calls for more such engagement, and high optimism regarding the growth of the field in the Sub-Saharan region.

Advancing Engaged Research Globally — Region by Region
Assessing Training Needs
Short Summary of Regional Workshop: [Asia]
October 29, 2024, online
Coordinator: Ria Lambino, Research Institute for Humanity and Nature

Background

This workshop has been initiated by the Td Training Collaboratory and the ITD Alliance and created a space to explore the needs for training collaborative, engaged research from different perspectives, involving scholars, policy makers, funders, educators and trainers. It explored the status of trainings in Asia, including existing offers and organizations providing these, types of trainings and current demands and asked participants to elaborate on desired futures and recommendations related to trainings to strengthen collaborative, engaged research. An online session was held on October 29, 2024 and this summary provides highlights of the discussion in this workshop.

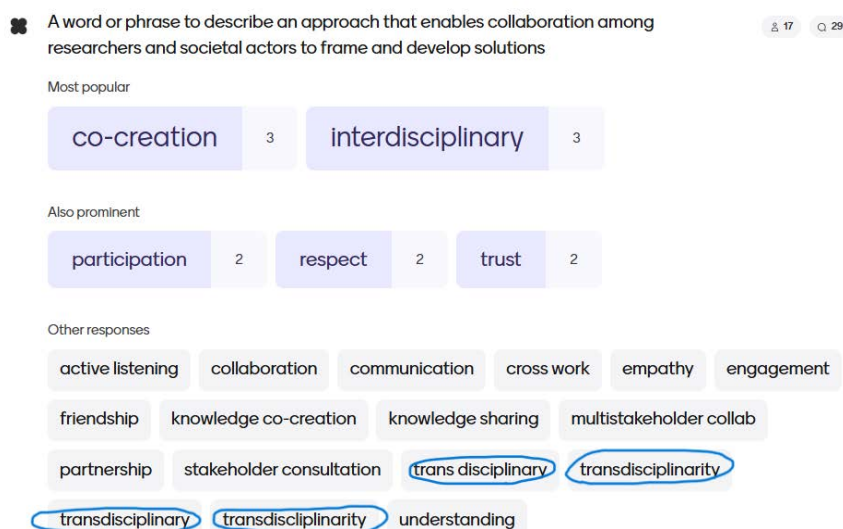
The data collected provides insights for future funding of training and trainers of collaborative, engaged research. In addition, it will serve as orientation for a newly forming working group of the ITD Alliance on education and training.

The workshop received 19 participants in total, coming from East Asia (Japan, Taiwan, Mongolia), Southeast Asia (Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines), South Asia (India) with different backgrounds; most participants identified themselves as researchers (12/19).

Results

To do justice to the heterogeneity of language used to name collaborative, engaged research, participants presented words or phrases used to describe an approach that enables collaboration among researchers and societal actors to frame and develop solutions together and focuses on a complex problem.

In Asia, *transdisciplinary* (in many forms of the word) and *co-creation* (3+1 “knowledge co-creation”) are used the most (4), followed by *interdisciplinary* (3)



What exists: In Asia, professional training has covered a range of skills, from KPI setting and publication development, to funding acquisition, proposal writing, and science-policy communication etc delivered through in-person workshops, online and hybrid sessions, hands-on fieldwork, and case studies. Initiatives like Inclusive Innovation workshops on TD facilitation skills, Future Earth's TERRA School, and foundational courses at the Sokendai program of RIHN introduce system thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, stakeholder analysis, and leadership. Much of the learning occurs through interdisciplinary dialogue, co-design projects, and "learning by doing" and these are not always

explicitly framed as TD training. Despite growing interest and funding opportunities, more structured TD-specific training could better prepare researchers for the complexities of this approach.

What could be: Participants recommended developing essential tools and skills such as systems thinking, science communication, and bridging silos. Priority actions include creating modular training programs that build foundational TD knowledge, raise awareness, and provide actionable guidelines, coupled with tools for monitoring and evaluation. Efforts must bridge the gap between science, policy, and practice through improved communication and partnerships with diverse stakeholders, ensuring multiple perspectives. Training should be tailored to different audiences, prioritizing researchers across career stages to disseminate knowledge widely and effectively. Some participants indicated key topics like sustainability, urbanization, air pollution, and just transitions. Trainers must combine expertise with strong delivery skills, sharing real-world experiences to inspire and educate. Training formats should be flexible, blending in-person sessions for engagement with online and on-the-job learning to suit diverse needs and schedules.

Recommended actions for building the field or advancing “transdisciplinary research” in Asia.

Participants suggested to build a core community for promoting TD approaches, creating collaborative spaces connecting researchers, policy makers and local communities to identify pressing issues and co-create solutions through workshops, roundtables, and hybrid alliances. Develop initiatives for co-creation, knowledge sharing, and methodological development. This includes engaging research institutions, universities, and national academies to train relevant social actors in TD approaches, while securing funding for TD courses and initiatives. Tailored leadership structures is critical, alongside developing resources like a white paper and analysis of TD research in Asia.

Specific organizations that should be leading this effort, due to their influence or experience Local NGOs, already engaged in real TD work, should be key players, along with universities and their management, which are central to training researchers and raising awareness. Senior and young academies, national think tanks, transnational organizations like the UN, IAP, TWAS, and ISC have the capacity to promote and lead TDR initiatives. International NGOs, such as the Tzu Chi Foundation, Indian Institute of Human Settlements, WGIA - International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs and International Funders for Indigenous People. Networks such as Future Earth and the Association of Research Councils of Asia can build the necessary collaborative structures and governance. Engaging funding bodies like the World Bank and other research councils is vital to securing financial support, while fostering inclusive innovation and training programs to equip stakeholders with the skills for impactful TD research.

Responsible organizations:

The workshop series was initiated by the Td Training Collaboratory, a global consortium of leading scholars/thought leaders and practitioners in transdisciplinary research, formed to identify key elements of what researchers need to know, do and be in the context of transdisciplinary research and to create materials for trainers. It was conducted in collaboration with the the Global Alliance for Inter- and Transdisciplinarity (ITD Alliance), a membership-based association that connects diverse, distributed networks of institutions and individuals around the world to foster inter- and transdisciplinarity. For more information see: www.itd-alliance.org.

Regional coordinator: Research Institute for Humanity and Nature is an inter-university research institute based in Kyoto, Japan promoting comprehensive research in global environmental studies covering a wide range of humanities and social sciences perspectives based on data from natural science. RIHN conducts interdisciplinary research traversing the academic foundations of the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences, as well as problem-solving transdisciplinary research in collaboration and cooperation with society.