

# WHY TRANSDISCIPLINARITY?

SWEAFUN Trans-Thematic Workshop for Researchers

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**Presented in cooperation with the Global Alliance for Inter- and Transdisciplinarity (ITD Alliance).**

# Outline

- Progress towards achieving the SDGs
- Transdisciplinarity
- Co-creating Knowledge for impact
- Case study
- The ITD Alliance

# Progress towards Sustainable Development and Agenda 2030

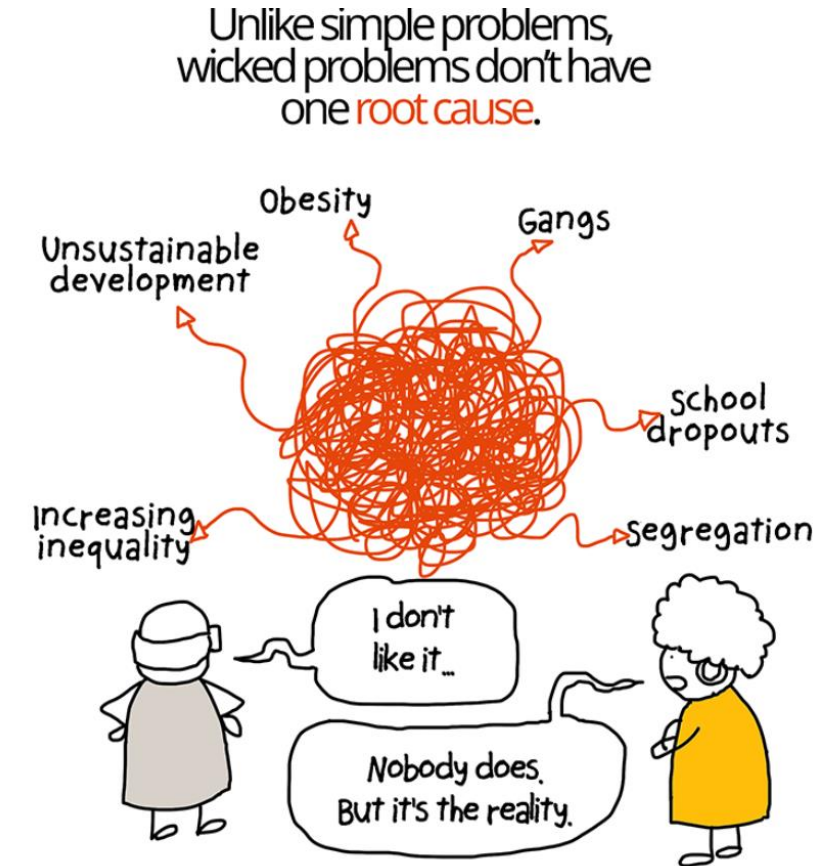
## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



- As at 2024, only 17% of SDGs targets are on track to be achieved,
  - Nearly 50% are showing minimal or moderate progress,
  - Progress on over a third has stalled or even regressed.
  - The COVID-19 pandemic
  - Conflicts
  - Geopolitical and trade tensions
  - Effects of climate change
  - Weak financial systems
  - Historical injustices
  - Weakening of global solidarity
  - Push factors for regional and international migration
  - Threat of technology
  - Social media, activism and populism
  - Industrialisation and clean production
  - Human trafficking and child endangerment
- Even though connected, all of these have impacted national priorities towards achieving the SDGs

# Researchers are problem solvers

- The SDGs represents a distinctive set of challenges experienced at local, national, regional and global levels
- Our local environments as universities and research institutes situate us within these seemingly intractable and complex, wicked problems with connected root causes
- ‘Wicked Problems’ demand approaches that are sustainably impactful

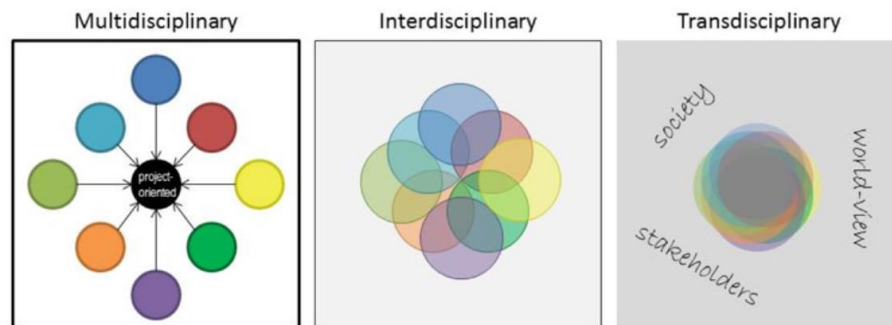


[source](#)

# Transdisciplinarity

- the **process** of **transformation** that occurs when **collaborative** research is **decentralised** to include the engagement of both **academic and non-academic experts** on **equal terms** in seeking solutions to complex **societal** problems

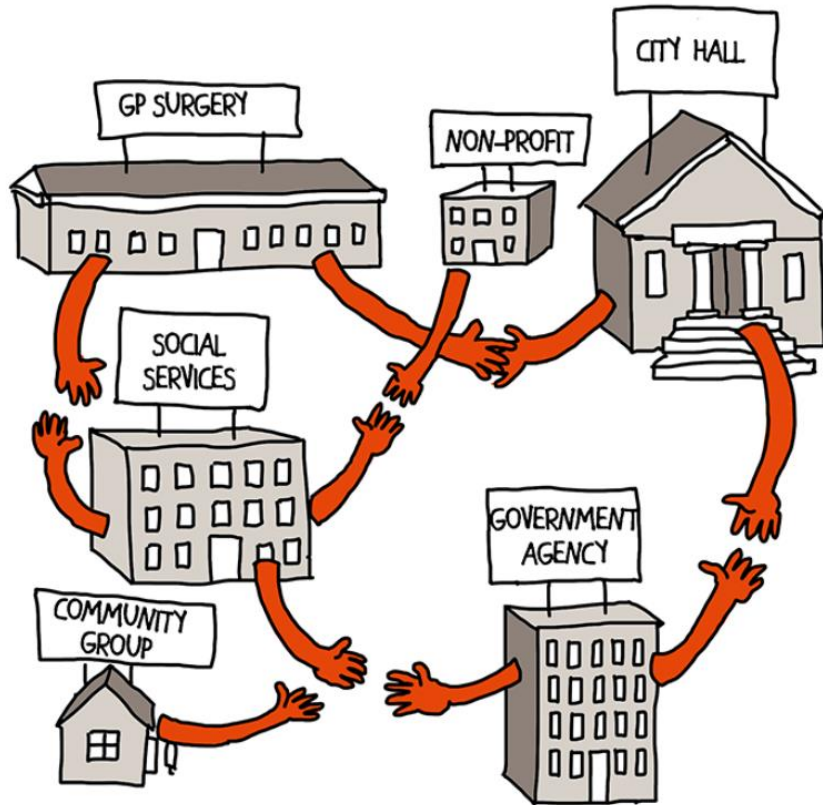
Multi- → Inter- → Transdisciplinary



Differentiation between Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Concepts

- Individual researchers
- Institutions
  - Teaching
  - Research
  - The third mission: society

# Co-creating Knowledge for Impact



Bammer (2021) identifies stakeholders:

- those made vulnerable by the problem (e.g. communities, ordinary citizens of various cultures, and socio-economic groups),
- those who have the capacity to solve the problem (e.g., government, researchers, and communities),
- Those who bring awareness to the problem (e.g., researchers, media, civil society, and advocacy groups),
- and those who establish capacities to address the problem (e.g., advocacy groups, researchers) and
- provide legal backing for solutions (e.g., government), among others.
- **Which group is missing here?**

# Think about this!

Poor air  
quality

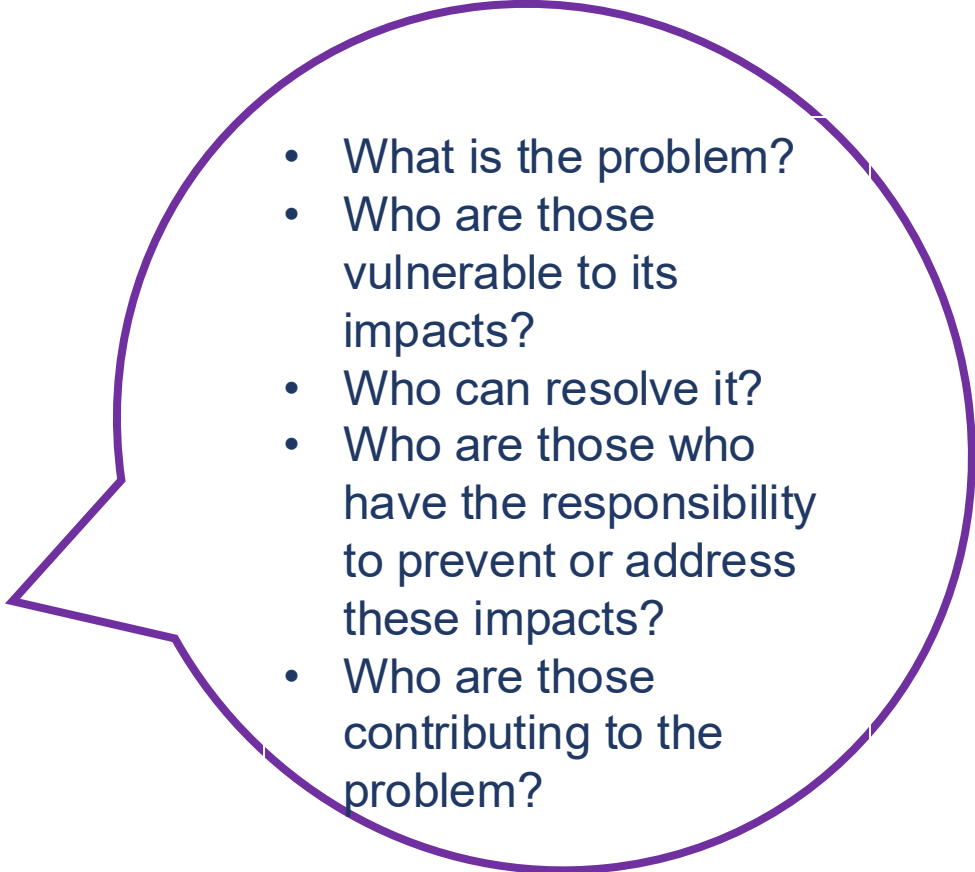
Digital divide

Food  
insecurity

Energy  
Poverty

Water  
Pollution

Affordable  
and clean  
transportation

- 
- What is the problem?
  - Who are those vulnerable to its impacts?
  - Who can resolve it?
  - Who are those who have the responsibility to prevent or address these impacts?
  - Who are those contributing to the problem?

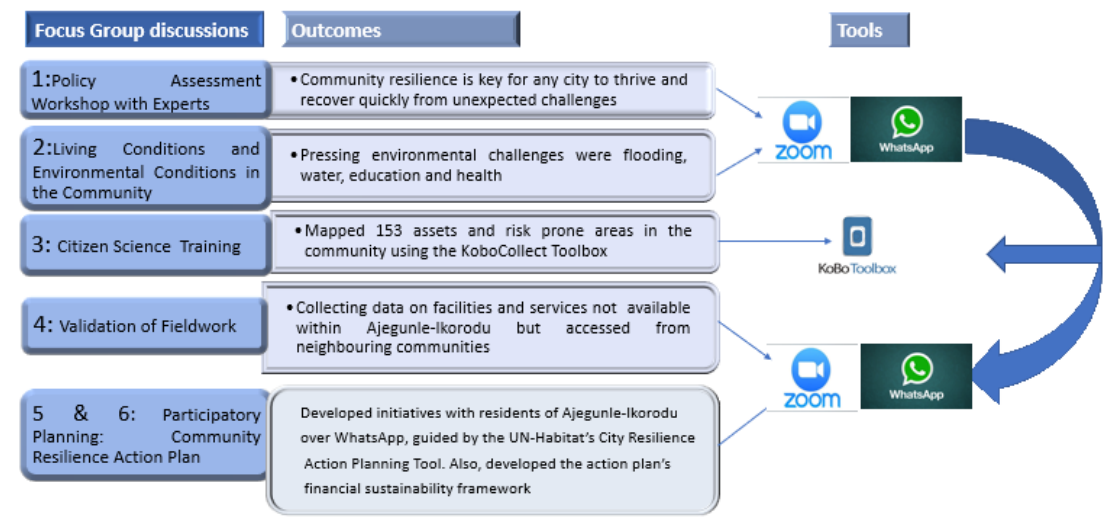
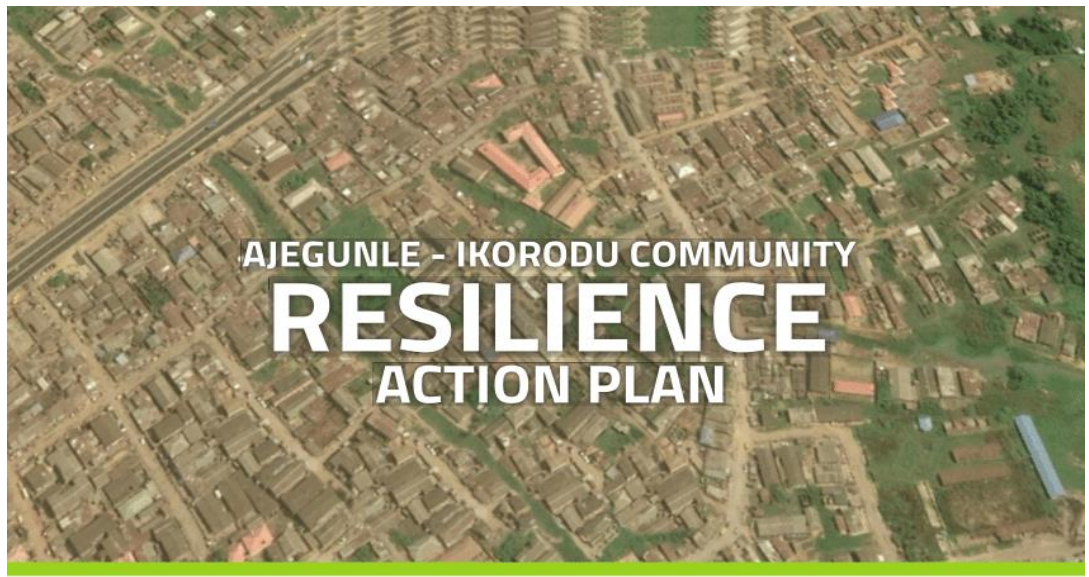
# Co-creating Mindsets

- Dismantling epistemic injustices
- Foster interdisciplinarity
- Trust
- Acknowledging not ignoring differences
- Balancing the power roles
- Institutional change: support and reward Transdisciplinarity across research cadre
- Learning the ‘tools of the trade’
- Seeking support



# Citizen Science Example:

From studying the impact of COVID 19 on domestic violence to co-creating a community resilience action plan.



HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG  
ABUJA  
Nigeria

UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS  
CENTRE FOR HOUSING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Available at:  
<https://ng.boell.org/en/2021/03/01/ajegunle-ikorodu-community-resilient-action-plan>

## Partners



HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG NIGERIA

**Ajegunle Ikorodu Community, Lagos**



## Case study

- Selected as one of 27 case studies presented at the [UNHABITAT Global Stakeholder Forum](#), evidencing implementation of the New Urban Agenda. (April 2022)
- Case-study: Urban reform database of the African Cities Research Consortium (2024)
- Urban Climate Change Research Network (UCCRN) Third Assessment Report Case-study (2024)

# A Note of Caution

- ID/TD projects explicitly foster not only scientific pluralism but also require the integration of social and societal actors, their interests, norms and values. The end goal is change and impact.
- Despite this, runs a risk of centralizing power in one direction: the convenor, the holder of resources, the voice that disseminates= the researchers.
- Complicity in making these societal actors voiceless because their experiences are not seen as credible or authoritative, a manifestation of testimonial injustice (Fricker, 2007).
- This could run throughout the entire process of research agenda, data collection, analysis and dissemination of findings.
- Resistance in adopting findings and hence the impact of IT/TD project outcomes

# ITD Alliance

The Global Alliance for Inter- and Transdisciplinarity (ITD Alliance) **strengthens and promotes the global capacity and the calibre** of collaborative modes of boundary-crossing research and practice.

Addressing complex  
problems and societal  
needs

Connecting actors  
and scales to  
advance collaborative  
modes of research  
and education

Increasing visibility  
and coalescing work  
currently dispersed  
across continents

Building capacity for  
inter- and  
transdisciplinary  
research and  
education

## Join us!



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## Our Activities:

ITD Conference

Events

Working Groups

Regional Networks

Projects

Resources

International Cooperation

Professional Opportunities



# Thank You !

## Read more/ References

- Bammer, G. (2021, October 14). Stakeholder engagement primer: 1a. Why a primer? 1b. Defining stakeholders. Integration and Implementation Insights. <https://i2insights.org/2021/10/14/defining-stakeholders/comment-page-1/#comment-31184>
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- Oyalowo, B., (2022) An Agenda for Transdisciplinary Research for Achieving African Higher Education's Third Mission. *Journal of Educational Studies*. Publishers: University of Venda, South Africa. Vol 21(1) 11-30. [https://journals.co.za/doi/full/10.10520/ejcs-jeds\\_v21\\_n1\\_a2](https://journals.co.za/doi/full/10.10520/ejcs-jeds_v21_n1_a2)

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