# SILP EXPERIMENTATION FUND

Cohort I.
Final Learnings Report

EIT Climate-KIC    Co-funded by the European Union    Sida

# SILP is a Learning Partnership between Sida and  EIT Climate-KIC

**Sida – the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency** – is a government agency that works to create better living conditions for people living in poverty and under oppression. Sida has long-term development cooperation with some 35 countries and supports regional projects as well as organisations that work globally. The work is focused on thematic areas that are of particular importance for combating poverty around the world, such as democracy, gender equality, climate and peaceful societies. Sida's activities are funded through Swedish tax revenue.

**EIT Climate-KIC is Europe's leading climate innovation agency and community.** We use a systems approach to shape innovation to support cities, regions, countries and industries meet their climate ambitions, acting in the 'messy middle' between commitments and reality.

Together with our partners across the globe, we implement. We open pathways to shift mindsets and behaviours, and enable decision makers and investors to act. We orchestrate large-scale demonstrations that show what is possible when cycles of innovation and learning are deliberately designed to trigger exponential decarbonisation and build resilient communities.

# INTRODUCTION

In a world facing unprecedented challenges—from climate change to social inequality—traditional approaches often fall short in addressing the complexity of these issues. The Systems Innovation Learning Partnership (SILP), a collaboration between the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and EIT Climate-KIC, is reimagining how we respond to these global challenges through the lens of systemic innovation.

SILP is not just about incremental change; it's about fundamentally shifting the way we think, act, and collaborate. By enhancing the capacities of individuals and organisations, SILP seeks to create novel approaches that transcend conventional knowledge, building a vibrant community of innovators and pioneers committed to transformative impact.

Central to this vision is a radical rethink of funding and decision-making. In 2023, EIT Climate-KIC recruited a diverse team of Community Grant Makers—individuals embedded in various regions, sectors, and networks—to take a leading role in distributing funds. This new approach decentralises decision-making power, allowing those with on-the-ground experience and local knowledge to shape how resources are allocated. By doing so, we are disrupting traditional funding hierarchies and empowering communities to take ownership of their innovation journeys.

At the heart of SILP is a bold vision: to reshape international development cooperation in ways that not only address immediate challenges but also alter the underlying power dynamics that perpetuate inequality and stifle progress. We believe that systemic innovation offers a powerful framework to uncover and disrupt the deep-seated assumptions, behaviours, and models that hinder meaningful change.

In May 2023, SILP launched the Experimentation Fund, welcoming seven grantees with pioneering projects aimed at driving systems change. These initiatives, spanning diverse geographical, cultural, and socio-economic contexts, have been engaged in a year-long journey to explore and implement innovative strategies that can reshape entire systems. This is not just an experiment for them—it is also an experiment for us. SILP's commitment to a learning-centered approach means that we, too, are part of this transformative process.

Our approach to funding is as innovative as the projects themselves. From microgrants designed to empower prospective applicants to the creation of a 'learning portfolio' that prioritises collective knowledge generation, SILP is challenging traditional funding paradigms. We are particularly interested in how shifting the power dynamics within funding processes can catalyse deeper and more sustainable systems change. As we reflect on our journey so far, we recognise that the ripple effects of our work extend far beyond the immediate cohort. We see a growing appetite for learning, collaboration, and co-creation within the global systems innovation community. SILP is still finding its place in this evolving landscape, but our commitment to deep engagement, trust-based funding, and empowerment remains unwavering.

Looking ahead, we aim to enhance accessibility to systems innovation, pioneering new narratives through clearer communication, compelling storytelling, and tangible examples of impact. We invite you to join us in expanding this field and exploring new opportunities for collaboration. Together, we can shape a future where systemic innovation becomes the norm, not the exception, in tackling the world's most complex challenges.

With innovation at the core, we have experimented with a number of different approaches to funding, such as providing microgrants to support prospective applicants and selecting a 'learning portfolio' focused on experiments that help us learn about the nature of systems change.

**AREAS OF INTEREST:**

- Experimenting with **a shift in the power dynamics of funding**, in service of supporting systems change.

- Exploring how **systems can be changed by altering the practices and structures of development cooperation funding.**

- **Generating knowledge** and insights around systemic impact **through a learning-centred approach.**

# EXPERIMENTATION FUND COHORT 1

## Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network
### (THAILAND/ASIA-PACIFIC)

**Exploring a Co-Leadership model for Inclusive Decision-Making and Transformation.**

PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE OF FORCED MIGRATION

LEADERSHIP    VISIBILITY

→ GO TO PAGE 14

## NALED
### (SERBIA AND THE WESTERN BALKANS)

**Shifting power towards local citizens in the context of urban planning.**

URBAN DEVELOPMENT    CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

COLLABORATION WITH EXISTING SYSTEMS

→ GO TO PAGE 20

## Zambia Agricultural Research Institute
### (ZAMBIA)

Enhancing community farm seed storage through use of low-cost storage vessels and structures.

SEED BANKS    SMALL-SCALE FARMERS

OPEN-POLLINATED VARIETIES (OPV) CROPS

→ GO TO PAGE 34

## Join For Water
### (UGANDA)

**Sustainably managing the land-river interface with women river ambassadors.**

LAND-RIVER MANAGEMENT    'RIVERPRENEUERSHIP'

WOMEN EMPOWERMEN

→ GO TO PAGE 30

## SILP
### (EUROPE)

**Experimenting with funding for systems change through a learning portfolio approach.**

SYSTEMIC APPROACH   FUNDING FOR LEARNING

RELATIONAL COLLABORATION

→ GO TO PAGE 37

## Railway Children India
### (INDIA)

**Transforming the Indian railway network into a protection net for unaccompanied vulnerable children.**

COLLABORATION WITH EXISTING SYSTEMS

CHILD PROTECTION   STATION-LEVEL TRAININGS

→ GO TO PAGE 17

## Power Compost
### (COLOMBIA)

**Learning how to transform the organic waste system as a collective.**

ORGANICA WASTE SYSTEM   COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP

COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING

→ GO TO PAGE 23

## Development Alternatives
### (INDIA)

**Providing safe, environmentally friendly mobility through a women-led network of e-rickshaws.**

SOLIDARITY NETWORK   MICRO MOVEMENTS

WOMEN EMPOWERMEN

→ GO TO PAGE 27

# Exploring a co-leadership model for inclusive decision-making and transformation

| ⬤⬤ Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) | ◉ Asia Pacific |
|---|---|

## About APRRN

The Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) is a regional advocacy network of 270 members in 28 countries across Asia and the Pacific that brings together diverse local, national, regional and global civil society organisations and other stakeholders, including refugee-led organisations, to protect and promote the rights of refugees and other people on the move in need of protection, as well as working to facilitate unhindered access to services and livelihood opportunities. Currently, the human rights and humanitarian system with its top-down structure of policy and decision-making and programming largely excludes local civil society—particularly Refugee Led Organisations and leaders —from shaping the human rights and policy and decision making space. This pro-

ject seeks to directly challenge this. By experimenting with a co-leadership model between one person with and another without lived experience of forced displacement, it aims to intentionally and meaningfully transform the landscape within the network, with partners and beyond and place current and former refugees at the centre of decision making. The aim is to note any allyship and resistance across the network, by fostering individual accountability while challenging mental models, relationships, policies and practices across the human rights and humanitarian sector.

## Experiment Context

As a catalyst for system change The Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) decided to change its leadership model from a single Secretary General position held historically by someone without lived experience of forced displacement to a shared, Secretary General co-leadership model be-

tween two persons, one with and one without lived experience of forced displacement. Doing so we thought would advance meaningful refugee participation (MRP) and the engagement of Refugee-led organizations (RLOs).

## Learning, Unlearning, and Innovation

At the beginning of the experiment, we realised that, although the Steering Committee had been involved in the decision to move to a co-leadership model, our wider network had not. We sought input through a stakeholder survey, which showed that most respondents thought that the co-leadership model motivates other organisations to centre those with lived experience in their leadership and **nearly half thought the change supports the redistributing of power in decision-making in APRRN.** However, most respondents were concerned that the

change could cause confusion about roles and responsibilities or disagreement between the Co-Secretary Generals.

To counter these concerns the Co-Secretary Generals focused on being present together at events and took part in five online consultations across the four regions. The positive connection and relationship between the Co-Secretary Generals was and still is visible internally and externally showing a clear united front and messaging.

The presence of both Co-Secretary Generals at the 12th Asia Dialogue on Forced Migration in May 2023 was a 'game changer', raising the profile of APRRN's new leadership model and bolstered interest in diversity, equity, and inclusion. Co-Secretary General Hafsar was the first person with lived experience of forced migration to sit on such a panel, raise issues, and offer solutions. Increased representation of those with lived experience has also led to invitations to other events and participation of more people with lived experience.

During and following the conferences, some RLO **members said they felt more safe and included in these discussions than before**, and more able to contribute, although we are also aware of it not yet being enough. **We followed up with more intentional internal learning spaces while recognizing that conversations about power, privilege**, and inclusion take time and reflection to learn and unlearn across cultures and gender differences, and beyond tokenistic representation. **Meaningful refugee participation is now one of APRRNs main advocacy priorities.**

Finding individuals with lived experience of forced migration to be on APRRNs Steering Committee has taken a more targeted effort to actively create spaces and support for refugee leaders to step forward. The Co-Secretary Generals made a targeted effort to find proactive and skilled refugee leaders

who are young and from diverse backgrounds. We now have more people with lived experience on the Steering Committee; however, we will need to keep providing support to and encouraging individuals to put themselves forward in future elections.

As Co-Secretary General Hafsar has emphasised, for meaningful MRP to truly work we need a sustainable platform where people with lived experiences can contribute in an impactful and equitable manner instead of having ad-hoc opportunities to represent and attend events in volunteer capacities. We need a framework that will allow meaningful partnerships between people with and without lived experiences to decentralise the hierarchy, shift power, and give agency to the affected populations.

**We have been able to influence changes in funding distribution.** UNHCR approved our proposal to fund prevention of sexual and gender-based violence by directly supporting 10 women-led RLOs doing front line work, reflecting the first time UNHCR allowed us to fund RLOs work directly, and piloting RLO funding from general funding streams.

Showcasing agency and facilitating hope: Hafsar's role as Co-Secretary General is showcasing the agency of people with lived experiences, **paving the way for other refugee**

leaders to step forward and changing the narrative of refugees from being a burden to being contributors and leaders. Additionally, for the refugee women, seeing another former refugee in this position gives them hope, confidence, and inspiration that they too can become the leaders and changemakers of their own communities.

The **top-down structure of human rights and humanitarian policy and programming still largely excludes local civil society, particularly RLOs and refugee-led initiatives (RLIs). This continues to deprive refugees of the dignity and ability to act independently, to have their human rights met**, and limits their roles as "beneficiaries" rather than active participants. We are also acutely aware of decreased attention on the Asia-Pacific region despite a staggering increase in the number of people in need due to the protracted complex situations in Afghanistan and Myanmar.

## Most significant realisation

We have had two significant realisations over the last year. First, there is less direct resistance than we had imagined to meaningful refugee participation. Many organisations, partners, and members are welcoming the new innovative approach, and there is increasing space for innovative dialogue and change.

The above being said, we also realised that there is a big difference between 'talking the talk' and 'walking the walk. It is essential that APRRN lead the way and be the change we want to see as this will make the real difference. Despite interest in meaningful refugee participation, many organisations struggle to let go of old ways. We need to look within our constituencies, lead by example, and ensure that in practice we are also creating open, inclusive, and accessible spaces for those with lived experience beyond just the co-leadership model.

## Proposed way forward

An ongoing challenge is the embedded institutional racism within the human rights/humanitarian sector. There is still a lot of resistance to change, often coming from places of fear embedded in policies and institutions that are hard to shift. We propose the following to continue shifting mindsets and encourage meaningful refugee participation:

- **Continuing the co-leadership and collaboratively advocating for a whole society approach;**

- **Providing long-term capacity building support to RLOs in advocacy, legal, and relevant training;**

- **Network weaving: linking members and sharing information through our working groups;**

- **Linking donors to RLOs to fund relevant on-the-ground projects;**

- **Promoting access for refugee advocates at the regional, national, and local levels;**

- **Prioritising APRRN's internal representation across the 4 constituencies; and**

- **Encouraging partners, including our financial partners, to be less risk-averse and explore new relationships with diverse representatives of people with lived experience.**

Through holding ongoing learning spaces around refugee participation and inclusion within APRRN we hope to embed a culture of respect and values for refugee leadership, participation, and inclusion. We also aim to cultivate more honest and critical conversations within our membership and networks.

# Safe and Green Mobility through a Network of Women-led E-Rickshaws

| | |
|---|---|
| ⦿⦿⦿ Development Alternatives | ⊙ India |

## About Development Alternatives

Development Alternatives, from India, is looking at safe and green mobility through a Network of Women-led E-rickshaws. The experiment aims to address economic and social disempowerment of women due to lack of mobility by exploring the impact of e-mobility solutions on their lives and identify factors that can make the e-mobility network robust by strengthening the local ecosystem. The project seeks to experiment with the e-mobility network as an investable model for replication in other districts or states across India.

## Experiment Context

Our experiment reflects a belief that micro movements of changes are happening in the community all around. In our case, this is the local Safe Mobility system. Such changes are driven by deep processes and beliefs. During our experiment, we began by understanding complex challenges faced by different actors in the Safe Mobility system and identifying imbalances in existing- (and non-existing) relationships between system actors. It became evident that the system for transportation space was inherently designed by males and for males to participate. However, micro movement was already occurring. We set out to enable existing and aspiring women e-rickshaw entrepreneurs to develop a sense of solidarity and to create an environment wherein any woman who aspires to set up an e-rickshaw business can access the required local support.

## Learning, Unlearning, and Innovation

**The birth of a solidarity network:** At the initial phase of the experiment, the team heard of instances where women e-rickshaw drivers were helping each other, like lending chargers, calling each other for help, or looking for support with challenges such as safety while driving alone at night. Realizing the potential of a naturally forming solidarity network among the women, we co-created with the women entrepreneurs the Aarya Groups, where the women who want to drive at night can both support each other, surface needs, and plan the next actions together. Now there are eight such groups each with at least 12 members, including existing and aspiring women entrepreneurs.

**Overcoming silos and building capacity:** A next challenge was figuring out how to solve diverse problems and get support from key stakeholders beyond the Aarya groups. The experiment team created the Aarya Manch platform to bring system actors from the Safe Mobility ecosystem together to co-create solutions to problems in current systems. As a customized version of the District Entrepreneurship Coalition, the Aarya Manches bring system actors (entrepreneurs, village administrators, technology vendors/suppliers, government agencies, financial institutions, NGOs, training/skill building institutions, etc.) to share, learn, and collaborate on solutions together.

**Driver training and certification – another first:** There are no formal driver training institutes or courses in driving e-rickshaws in the district of Mirzapur. At the same time, police started fining women drivers for not carrying an e-rickshaw license. With more women coming forward to take up e-rickshaws as a means for their livelihood, one Aarya Manch created an informal driving training academy, co-created with women drivers and system actors. Dialogues with police, regional transit authority representatives, e-rickshaw vendors, and women drivers resulted in recognition of a certificate received upon completion of driver training in lieu of an e-rickshaw license. Five women drivers have since offered training and over 60 women have received driving training certificates.

**Involving men in safe mobility builds internal and external support:** During an Aarya Manch meeting, male actors expressed interest in supporting the safe mobility project. The Development Alternatives began to clearly welcome men at Manch meetings, realizing that equality will not be realized if men are excluded, including both system actors and male members of the families of women e-rickshaw drivers. The team has since seen a shift in who attends and shows support in a variety of ways, such as offering reduced rates for e-rickshaw repairs and free training on basic e-rickshaw repairs. One local authority (gram panchayat) has promised a block of land for a woman-operated e-rickshaw stand.

**Removing barriers:** Several other issues arose as the experiment unfolded, each requiring attention and innovative problem solving. A few notable examples include the following. Driving children to and from school: During the early phases, the team worked through barriers to schools signing memorandum of understanding (MOUs) with women e-rickshaw drivers to pick up and drop off schoolchildren. After meetings and dialogues, MOUs were signed enabling this service.

**Informing choices for rickshaw batteries:** While co-creating the enterprise model for battery charging station, some women entrepreneurs resisted shifting from lead acid batteries to lithium batteries, despite the advantages of lithium batteries in terms of longer life and lower cost over their expected life, reflecting a potential to double income over time compared to using lead batteries. Diving listening led to another co-created capacity building process resulting in increased demand for lithium batteries.

**Finance for entrepreneurs with bigger aspirations:** Seeing the potential for economic benefits, many women started to aspire to setting up e-rickshaw enterprises. However, a major barrier was access to loans and other sources of financial support. Many women depend on their male counterparts for financial support and do not have bank accounts. After listening and discussing this finance gap at an Aarya Manch, multiple financial institutions and social investors started providing access to below-market rate credit.

**Systems-level shifts:** We are seeing a shift in mindset at the systems level, reflected by increased demand for women-led e-rickshaw enterprises across different parts of India, and banks and donors offering to subsidise the costs of entrepreneurship for women e-rickshaw drivers.

## Most significant realisation

The most significant realisation that emerged was motivation and willingness of the system actors to work together. Initially they were all working in silos. When relationships based on trust between Regional Transport Offices, vendors of e-rickshaws, and traffic police began to emerge through this process, things like the co-creation of the certificate alternative to drivers licensing emerged. This change alone helped women drivers economically and gave them a sense of control over their assets.

## Proposed way forward

Opportunities to continue and expand systems change include continuing the Aarya Groups and Manch functions through community platforms. This will require continued capacity building for system actors and women entrepreneurs, including knowledge, tools, and further collaboration with partners having shared values-vision. Through such partnerships and influence, we aim to engage with women federations that would accelerate adoption of Safe Mobility enterprises across their networks. Moreover, developing case studies and papers on existing challenges and co-created solutions will help to influence relevant authorities to ease processes for adoption of our model.

✳ **Click here** to find out more about our 'Sensemaking' process

## Key insights from our year-long sense process

**Leveraging Community Bonds:**

A strong sense of community and mutual support developed among the women involved in the experiment. *"The women were helping each other; they were not being told from the outside but the project helped them to support each other."* This self-sustaining network allowed them to leverage their bonds for greater empowerment.

**Impact on Men's Work Environment:**

The improvements made to the women's rickshaw work environment also had a positive impact on their male counterparts. *"The changes for the women rickshaw drivers changed the work environment for the men as well,"* contributing to a more inclusive workspace.

**Shifting Gender Roles and Empowerment:**

The initiative is challenging long-standing discrimination against rural Indian women. *"They are gaining agency at home and outside of the home, and this shift is encouraging a mindset change on the role of women in the family."* This empowerment creates a *"domino effect of women inspiring other women to find their role and agency within their community."*

**Economic Empowerment Through Entrepreneurship (ENT):**

Many of the women, once engaged in hard labour or unemployed, are now thriving as entrepreneurs. *"These women are stepping up to the opportunity of becoming self-sufficient through ENT."* This has enabled them to *"transport their children and others' children to school"* and provided them with *"bargaining power,"* allowing them to redefine their roles in society.

**State Government Interest and Scaling Concerns:**

The state government is showing interest in replicating this initiative across other regions. However, there is concern that *"if it gets into that [scaling], there will be a different mechanism of reporting that will change the way we have been making progress under SILP."* This raises fears about losing the flexibility and focus that has driven success thus far.

**Learning-Centred Approach Creates Opportunity:**

*"Being allowed to focus on a learning approach has opened up the opportunity space for this work, which started several years ago."* However, there is a risk that "momentum might roll back" if more traditional state or donor-driven processes are introduced during scaling.

# Citizens voice in urban planning

| NALED | Serbia |

## About NALED

NALED, from Serbia and the Western Balkans, have discovered a significant issue faced by citizens and the economy: a lack of familiarity with the planning process implemented in their environment. This lack of information leads to their late inclusion in the planning process, resulting in street protests. Furthermore, citizens are not adequately educated on how to formulate a remark on an adopted plan and ensure its validity and consideration by the plan maker. The experiment focused on understanding how to involve citizens more effectively and efficiently in the planning process, empowering them to express their needs and generate comments that will ensure that urban plans better reflect communities' needs and development potentials.

In response to these challenges, they have developed and implemented a digital platform within a pilot local self-government territory, that aims to facilitate citizen engagement in the planning process. Through this digital platform, citizens receive timely information about the commencement of the planning process. Additionally, they have the opportunity to submit their objections within the legally prescribed deadline.

## Experiment Context

Serbia has faced a lack of transparency and citizen awareness regarding urban planning process and citizen rights, including how citizens can influence plan adoption and voice objections. As a result, dissatisfied and distrustful citizens have taken protests to the streets after planning has ended and construction has begun, when it is too late to change decisions. By involving citizens in the planning process, we aim to create a more transparent and inclusive system and alleviate concerns of investors and local authorities about construction site protests.

## Learning, unlearning, and innovation

**Building citizen capacity:** Citizens did not know how to find information on urban planning or understand their role in the planning process. We developed a comprehensive guide called Be a Part of the Plan and distributed it to the residents. We created a questions and answers guide to help citizens find answers easily and ease the burden of responding to questions on local government representatives.

**Boosting information transparency and rapid accessibility:** Research indicates that over 90% of citizens would like increased transparency in the planning process and digital access to planning documents. The Be Part of the Plan platform enables citizens to access documents electronically and receive electronic updates on changes to urban planning documents, a significant step.

**Generating public interest and involvement:** We utilized social networks, press releases, news broadcasts, and a session of the NALEDs Alliance for Property and Investments to promote the IT platform extensively, generating both more public interest and public involvement. The national media service has invited us to make a guest appearance and discuss this important subject.

**To prevent objections from being rejected,** we created a model for writing objections that meets the required standards. We also conducted educational activities and developed an IT platform that allows citizens to access information about potential changes to plans during the initiative phase for the first time, going beyond local government's legal obligation.

**Electronic submissions preferred:** Research showed that many citizens prefer to submit objections electronically. Be a Part of the Plan has a function to submit objections via email; however, updating the current mandate regulatory framework mandating in-person submissions has not yet been approved. As an interim solution, the pilot local self-government has offered a temporary measure for citizens to submit objections electronically.

## Most significant realisation

Before beginning our experiment, we recognized that the public's involvement in the planning process was insufficient, leading to protests once construction had commenced. However, we lacked specific information on the extent of public participation, or rather lack thereof. Our research revealed that a staggering 86% of citizens had never engaged in public inspection of planning documents, and 95% of citizens believed that the public lacked adequate education to partic-ipate in the planning process. These findings empha-sized the need for a more transparent and accessible planning process for citizens.

Our goal was to empower every citizen to provide meaningful comments and influence construction activities within their environment. We have made sig-nificant progress, but many challenges still remain.

# Proposed way forward

To address the challenges at hand, it is crucial to recognize the pivotal role of government representatives and decision-makers in effecting change through legislation. To enhance the platform further, it is necessary to establish seamless integration with existing state IT systems and ensure widespread adoption throughout Serbia. However, achieving this goal would require additional financial resources.

The proposed platform holds immense potential for the competent authorities and the general public, as it would greatly contribute to a more streamlined planning process. To fully enable the functionality of the IT platform and facilitate the electronic submission of objections to planning documents, certain legal regulations need to be amended. This would empower citizens by providing them with a simple and accessible means to stay informed and participate in the planning process.

Our goal is to update and clarify the legal framework governing the process, digitize and enhance the transparency of the planning process, and expand this not only across Serbia, but by positioning Serbia as a regional leader in this regard.

✳ **Click here** to find out more about our 'Sensemaking' process

# Key Insights from a year-long Sensemaking process

**Citizen Empowerment in Urban Planning:**

There is a growing realisation that both citizens and authorities are often unaware of their power and roles in urban planning. As noted, *"Citizens [are] unaware of their power, role, and process for contribution to urban planning,"* while authorities fear that citizen involvement may slow down development. Both sides operate from preconceived positions, without recognising the shared opportunity for collaboration.

**Building Productive Relationships:**

Positive relationships are forming between key actors, including NALED, local authorities, ministries, and citizens. This *"good chemistry"* is creating fertile ground for progress in urban planning processes, highlighting the importance of collaboration.

**Challenges with Local Government and Elections:**

Elections during the implementation of the experiment posed challenges in maintaining relationships with local authorities. For example, ensuring that the IT platform for citizen consultation was not used for political purposes became a key concern. *"Local governments are not interested in being so transparent to the cities,"* with fears that involving citizens in urban planning could slow down the process.

**Increasing Local Government Engagement:**

Despite these challenges, the initiative gained traction, with over 20 local governments connecting to learn about the IT platform during a recent meeting. The slogan *"Be part of the plan"* became widely recognised, indicating growing interest in citizen engagement. However, the "*low visibility of projects nationally and locally"* remains an obstacle.

**Sustaining Progress Beyond the Project:**

A *"memorandum of cooperation"* with local authorities was identified as crucial for ensuring the continuation of the IT platform and citizen consultation process beyond the initial project. This formal agreement would provide the structure needed for long-term collaboration.

# Collective Learning to transform the organic waste system in Chía

| Power Compost | Colombia |
|---|---|

## About Power Compost

Power Compost SAS BIC, from Colombia, is exploring collective learning approaches to transform the organic waste system in Chía (Colombia). The experiment aims to combine inclusive participation, community-led communication, and diverse social, digital, and agroecological technologies to promote transformational change in the organic waste systems of municipalities. It also seeks to connect existing initiatives and inspire collaboration for sustained change. Additionally, the project aims to investigate how this learning experiment can connect with the cycles of other systems, particularly the local electoral system, to support transformational change.

## Experiment Context

Chía is a municipality with a population of approximately 150,000 residents located 10 km north of Bogotá, Colombia. Chía's organic waste system, despite efforts, was marked by a patchwork of uncoordinated actions and challenges. Despite ongoing efforts, the system remained fragmented, with uncoordinated actions, low community participation and most waste ending up in landfills. Institutional conflicts and a lack of political will hinder progress, and the absence of comprehensive policies and environmental agendas exacerbate the disconnect, preventing the establishment of a regional circular economy. This disjointed approach is still further aggravat-ed by socio-cultural barriers, where organic waste is seen as mere trash rather than a valuable resource.

However, motivated citizens and environmental leaders keep pushing for change. The Chía Re-Conecta experiment aimed to combine inclusive, community-led participation with diverse digital and agroecological technologies to drive transformational change in Chía's organic waste system. This required fostering trust, building collaborative networks, and implementing policies that support a circular economy for organic waste.

## Learning, unlearning, and innovation

Guided by the experimental essence of the grant and the tone provided by the SILP team, **we approached the project with a focus on learning and adaptability.** We recognized the imperative of constructing a project grounded in transparency and **mutual trust, intricately interwoven with the local community.** This foundational understanding empowered us to **craft a project structure robust enough for self-reflection and iteration in response to challenges**, both within our team and among our experiment community. This approach enabled us to proactively identify and engage with existing initiatives within the Chía community, even prior to initiating the experiment. By forging connections with key community actors, some of whom later became integral members of our team, we cultivated relationships rooted in shared purpose and mutual trust. Guided by this we were able to carry out a project that embodies systemic values and serves as a testament to the transformative potential of collaborative, insight-driven initiatives.

When entering a **new territory or system from an "external" perspective**, the key lies in focusing efforts to recognize, value, and listen to existing actors and initiatives, and to avoid "starting from scratch", thereby disregarding valuable experiences and knowledge. This lesson led us to establish close ties with various actors, building trust and a sense of **co-ownership** around the project and awareness of interdependence within the same system. Framing this process as a joint learning experiment resulted in the creation of **lasting connections and bonds** driven by a genuine interest in understanding the transformative potential of organic waste and the conviction that systemic transformation is a necessity.

Additionally, reflecting on the importance of strengthening bonds among actors, we decided to design **flexible, unstructured, welcoming environments** for exchanging ideas that not only created active participation but also facilitated a deeper emotional connection with the process and participants. However, we have realised the need to design more ways to connect with both governmental and business actors (recognized as key players in the system) to encourage their frequent participation, creating fruitful dialogues, and promote coordinated collective action for systemic transformation.

**It is essential for actors to recognize the system they are part of and understand their own agency.** Information about the system acts as fertiliser that nourishes and energises actions aimed at generating changes. Frequent and clear communication in collaborative projects is of great importance; however, constantly visualising poses a significant challenge. We therefore implemented strategies focused on proximity and transparency, such as 'hybrid' (both in-person and digital) spaces for communication, designed to ensure that all involved individuals were informed and visible actors. Bidirectional feedback enabled us to effectively address tensions and conflicts, and delegate certain processes to individuals associated with Chía for their autonomous development.

The methodological and experiential design was crucial to foster collaboration and active participation throughout the project. **We invited groups whose voices are often overlooked in such settings,** such as older adults, children, and teenagers, thus promoting **intergenerational reflection.** While the diversity of formats enabled us to reach varied audiences, it was the leaders of community-based initiatives and collectives who demonstrated greater alignment with the project's purpose, showing consistent participation, strong commitment, and a desire to enhance their own initiatives through it. However, we encountered the challenge that some stakeholders (such as government actors or private enterprises) had different individual needs and preferences, aspects we could not fully address due to team capacity and project scope. We are reflecting on how to diversify spaces to engage other key stakeholders.

**The recognition of tensions as pivotal components for learning and growth also shaped our approach.** We understood the need to confront these tensions rather than disregard them, as they often unveil deeper systemic issues that require attention. This insight led us to embrace tensions as catalysts for improvement, sparking proactive actions to address them collaboratively within our team and with stakeholders. Additionally, we **reassessed our financial strategy, redirecting resources to address underlying tensions** constructively, rather than perpetuating traditional "top-down" dynamics. We insisted upon transparent communication and dialogue

to strive for openness and continuous improvement, facilitating trust and collaboration among stakeholders, and driving meaningful change.

The **transformative potential of prototyping and rapid evolution**, supported by trust, fundamentally shaped our approach. Trust and collaborative problem-solving became a cornerstone as we iterated our prototypes and rapidly tested new strategies. Ensuring that financial tensions were addressed openly and collaboratively built trust and mobilised actors.

Throughout this journey, we learned that relationships within a system cannot be imposed or forced; it is crucial to recognise the project's role within the system and act accordingly. This realisation led us to release control and trust that what has been built systematically and organically can be replicated beyond any directive. This experience helped us understand our role as facilitators and catalysts within the system. Crucial to this was having the support of a funder that believes in these premises, with a focus on learning and experimentation.

Otherwise, "letting go" and "letting be" would not have been possible, as they require coherence with the project's objectives and scope formulation.

Chía's organic waste system predated our intervention and will persist beyond it. **We are consciously relinquishing control**, allowing the community to further appropriate the Chía Re-Conecta project. This enables the project to transcend Power Compost's intervention, creating a sense of ownership and agency within the community. By recognising the system as their own, community members become key in the management and continued development of the project.

Our understanding of Chía's organic waste system has evolved significantly through our learning journey. Initially, we recognised fragmented efforts and pervasive distrust within the community. Over time, we identified deep institutional deficiencies and socio-cultural barriers, leading us to focus on **creating community ownership, transparency, and collaboration.**

## Most significant realisation

Our most significant realization is **the transformative power of community ownership and trust in driving sustainable change.** Initially, the system was characterized by fragmentation and distrust. Our shift from a top-down approach to a bottom-up strategy allowed community members to drive change and built a strong sense of ownership. When the community feels agency within the system, their engagement and commitment to sustainable practices significantly increase.

By **shifting our focus to enable and support community-driven initiatives**, we facilitated a more resilient

and sustainable organic waste management system in Chía. Engaging with community leaders, schools, environmental collectives, and businesses created a synergy that amplified the impact of individual actions. This approach also highlighted the value of integrating educational initiatives, policy support, and sustainable practices to create a comprehensive strategy for organic waste management. Ultimately, this realization underscored that **true systemic change is achievable when the community is not only involved but also leads the process.**

## Proposed way forward

The experiment has led to significant advances in community awareness regarding the priority of organic waste management. Supporting the capacity of existing initiatives remains fundamental. To advance progress further, more actors will need to be involved, more alternative waste management measures (more circular and regenerative) will be required, and citizen education expanded. Another significant need and challenge is alignment with institutions, businesses, collectives, schools, and the municipality through policies and programs.

**Click here** to find out more about our 'Sensemaking' process

## Key Insights from a year-long Sensemaking process

**Understanding the Importance of Territory and Networks:**

A deep understanding of the local context is crucial for transforming the organic waste system in Chia, Colombia. *"Territory is so important. You need to understand the place you're working. You need to take the time to undertake a deep learning of the network."* This approach allowed the team to effectively map community needs and dynamics.

**Building Relationships with the Government:**

Effective collaboration with the local government emerged from *"listening with them, understanding their demands, and then mapping the need."* Initially, the local municipality showed *"zero interest in compost"* until the local community became actively involved, showcasing the power of grassroots engagement.

**Engagement and Impact at Scale:**

Despite not being established startups, the project partners managed to create an impact at scale by working directly with the community. *"We have built something for the community and are now handing it over,"* emphasising the sustainability of the initiative. Workshops helped understand local power dynamics and build an education network focused on organic waste transformation.

**Technology and Passion Driving Change:**

The team's passion for the project played a key role in its success. The tech platform, featuring a *"3D visual of the network,"* allows the community to continue updating and editing it, ensuring the project's longevity and adaptability over time.

**Public Policy as a Tool for Change:**

A public policy document is being developed to serve as evidence of the work completed. This document will provide a formal framework for future initiatives, helping to sustain the project's impact and guide similar efforts moving forward.

# Transforming the india railway network to a protection net for unaccompanied vulnerable children

| Railway Children | India |
| --- | --- |

## About Railway Children

Railway Children India, from India, is looking at the Indian Railway network to protect vulnerable children. The experiment is exploring the potential of training and supporting railway personnel to protect vulnerable children and reunify them with their families by co-ordinating with District Child Protection Units (DCPU), without relying on NGOs. It seeks to strengthen coordination between DCPUs to effectively reintegrate vulnerable children with their families and prevent unnecessary separation of children from safe family environments. The project also aims to activate innovation and place a trained 'Fellow' at a systemic level to facilitate convergence between railway staff and existing child protection officers to ensure effective case management of vulnerable children.

## Experiment Context

Despite existing child protection mechanisms, thousands of vulnerable children arrive alone at India's major railway junctions. The problem is acute on the Howrah-Delhi railway line, widely used for migration and child trafficking. Prior to the experiment, an estimated 20,000 children using that line needed care and protection, and only 10 percent of them were likely to have been protected by the current systems.

In March 2023 the Ministry of Women and Child Development issued a new Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the Child Helpline, including Child Help Desks within stations, and a transition from civil society support to District Child Protection Units (DCPUs). Whilst the system transitioned there were additional risks to vulnerable children not protected. At the time, Child Help Groups were dormant, the status of children protected by officials was unclear, and child protection among railway stakeholders was not well coordinated. Through this experiment, Railway Children India sought to provide the training and support needed for railway personnel to protect vulnerable children and reunify them with family without depending on child protection officers at every station.

## Learning, unlearning, and innovation

We noticed in June 2023 that there was a void of support in districts like Patna and Ghaziabad. Child Helpline was not there, and railway Personnel needed support in handling cases. **Railway Children India's credibility from past work with stakeholders enabled us** to be involved in several ways throughout the experiment, such as providing training to railway personnel, raising awareness through initiatives like street plays in in the railway stations of the respective distriscts, and meeting with officials in charge of security and child protection.

We noticed some issues with the new SOP, such as Form 1 did not have any specific reference to daily diary entry, the documentation of child's initial contact with the police and child protection system. Knowing that daily diary entry in the Master Register would make tracking the child's journey easier, we ensured that the reference to DD Entry was mentioned in the admission format of Master Register. Railway Children India was present when the SOP was revised to address this and to develop guidelines.

We noticed that the District Child Protection Unit's role at the station in Patna was passive and they were not able to conduct outreach in the station. Hence, we organised a program to acknowledge the important role of railway personnel and connect with them, and trained railway officials through station-level trainings. During and after the trainings, our team receiving queries from railway officials about supporting children outreached in the trains. We quickly responded to queries and connected officials with the right stakeholders if children were found at the station.

**Updating our plan to match context:** We noticed that different realities at the two pilot locations (Patna & Ghaziabad districts), therefore we shifted from a single project plan to location-specific and separate plans of action. We were able to do this because of weekly meetings, with CEO being present, and through color coding of a tracking GANTT chart which helped us see what was not happening and made us reflect on why.

Rapid piloting, assessment, and adjustment: We noticed that the station coordination protocol drafted in the initial phase of the SILP project was ambiguous & needed updating to reflect the changed context in 2023. Therefore, we made updates and held workshops to understand whether the updated protocol tracked with the realities in the field. We also tracked quantitative & qualitative indicators quarterly for each step of the coordination protocol and, building on feedback from researchers and consultants, also conducted a review of the coordination protocol vis-à-vis the SOP after 6 months. We were able to evolve the coordination protocol document based on the observation of realities at the pilot locations.

**Problem identification and response:** In Patna, we noticed that data related to children protected was not being maintained and there were no standard formats or common data pool. Together with existing staff in Patna, we created an Excel sheet with the needed data until a standard format based on Form A of the SOP was established. Also in Patna, we utilized a budget for supplementary food to feed children who were not receiving food.

Railway Children India desires a future where each child in need of care and protection is able to access services through a coordinated platform of Child Help Group in the railway stations. **Concerning aspects of current reality include corruption and difference in treatment and labeling** of children from marginalized backgrounds, underscored by comments such as "every child is not required to be protected but certain children do". Change would minimally require that the Child Helps Desks are adequately staffed, resourced, and functional; training of Railway Policy; and centralised real-time data about children protected across railway stations by all stakeholders. **Each stakeholder (e.g., station masters) would also need a sense of ownership and collaborative responsibility.**

Some Railway Personnel are coordinating with counterparts and protecting children at stations and in moving trains. Also, after Railway Children India provided training to the railway personnel in stations like Sahibabad, protections improved. In such positive scenarios, we saw that police are often not recognized within their system and by society as having a prevention and protection role. Recognition could improve motivation.

## Most significant realisations

We have had two most significant realizations as part of a learning experiment. First, the District Child Protection Unit is visibly taking ownership in child protection, both in the main city stations and in more remote stations, showing it can work as an empowered government agency.

Second, Railway Children's role of providing technical support to government stakeholders has been perceived to be 'system strengthening' rather than as a parallel program, leading to increased acceptance and better relationships with government stakeholders. In addition, the rigour of our follow up, availability, and continuous engagement has helped us to be perceived as reliable support.

## Proposed way forward

We would propose to address the challenges and utilise opportunities to build the capacity of railway officials, police personnel, and district child protection functionaries by:

- **facilitating continuous engagement of key stakeholders with each other through the Child Help Groups;**

- **Continuing to advocacy for any helpful revisions of the Railways SOP and Child Helpline;**

- **Playing an active role in Training institutes/Division of railways and DWCD,**

We have several ideas that would lead to improved coordination between stakeholders, including not only at the station-level, but considering a larger goal of a child-friendly and child-safe railway corridor. We hope to strengthen the belief that every child has a right to be protected with respect and without bias, and to build the tradition of prioritizing the best interests of the child.

## Key Insights from a year-long Sensemaking process

**Activating Collaboration Within Existing Systems:**

The project leveraged existing mechanisms to create collaboration between railway officials and district child protection officers. This approach was key to enhancing child protection efforts, demonstrating that working within established structures can lead to meaningful change. *"There were so many functions within the railway system that, if working together, had the power to really influence the wellbeing of the children."*

**Shared Responsibility for Larger Challenges:**

A major breakthrough came from fostering a sense of shared responsibility. By encouraging stakeholders to lean into challenges beyond their individual capacity, the project empowered different actors to address issues they couldn't tackle alone. *"Getting people to lean into tackling larger challenges that they alone would not have the resources or knowledge to tackle"* became a central theme in creating sustainable collaboration.

**Empowering Existing System Components:**

The initiative focused on empowering parts of the system to take on new roles, breaking the reliance on intermediary organisations. *"Breaking the need of an intermediary organisation claiming a role, but rather empowering a current part of a system to act in a new way"* was a pivotal moment, allowing existing structures to adapt and take ownership of the solution.

# Sustainably managing the land river interface with women river ambassadors

| Join for Water | Uganda |
|---|---|

## About Join Water

Join for Water, from Uganda, is looking at Women River Ambassadors (WORIAs) as drivers of change in sustainably managing the land-river interface, specifically of the Mpanga catchment in Uganda. It aims to explore the potential of strengthening the capacity of women to participate in knowledge development and conservation planning through the WORIAs initiative, to help them become drivers of positive change in sustainably managing the LRI. It seeks to experiment with establishing WORIA-groups and identifying the boundary conditions under which they can operate. The experiment also aims to investigate how knowledge development and exchange can empower women to become actors of change in their community as WORIAs, and how they can facilitate community-based consensus-building and increase responsiveness from duty bearers on sustainable management of the LRI.

## Experiment Context

In western Uganda, the land-river interface (LRI) system in Karangura is the source of the Mpanga River where many human-environment interactions take place. People meet, wash, and fetch water and resources. Women often harvest vegetable crops. However, due to rapid population growth and uncontrolled urban expansion, the pressure on fragile ecosystems, particularly riverbanks, in Uganda has escalated with more settlements and farming activities extending to would-be river buffer zones. These areas are more exposed to risks of flooding, water-related conflicts, and unsustainable agricultural practices leading to erosion, water pollution, and loss of biodiversity. Access to clean water supply and sufficient water for agricultural production is increasingly becoming a challenge. Climate change makes the situation worse for highly vulnerable small-scale farming communities, and especially for women who are in most homes charged with feeding the families and making water available for domestic use.

Working within a largely male-dominated management system, Women River Ambassadors (WORIAs) are women who convene near small streams that feed into the bigger Mpanga River. WORIAs share a vision to make a positive change in their society, and their location naturally aligns with the hydrological system of the River. Recognizing women's disproportional vulnerability and the critical role of women in driving solutions, Join for Water and WORIAS developed and delivered community-embedded curriculum on land-river management, co-created a river buffer management zone, and evolved the experiment activities based on learning that mobilizing WORIAS is not enough by itself for real and lasting change.

# Learning, Unlearning, and Innovation

As we came to understand what else was needed, we adapted and tried new things:

**Gender and the inclusion of male champions:** Some women expressed concern that they would not be able to participate if their husbands would be left out of the process. In addition, land is often not easily accessible to women, and the current environmental management system is male dominated. We turned these barriers into opportunities by using school grounds for demonstration projects and parent-teacher associations to involve male counterparts and promote men as champions for the WORIAs. An insight and best practice is to include both women and men throughout the process.

**Supporting income-generating activities:** Together with the WORIAs, we introduced financial literacy and adopted the Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) approach to address personal and household needs. The VSLA encourages WORIAs to meet regularly both for financial empowerment and as a 'safe space' to discuss emerging challenges within their society, as individuals, and as a group.

**WORIA creativity and talent:** The experiment revealed skills and talents among the WORIAs including innovative ways to raise awareness. WORIAS themselves composed an anthem and a skit about river management, which we and other partners would love to see recorded and shared more broadly.

**Emerging interest from government and other actors:** We set up the experiment to have actors (political leaders, technical personnel, civil society, university, religious leaders) play a role as duty bearers, whom the WORIAs would engage and hold accountable to their mandate for river buffer protection. As the engagement occurred, some actors, particularly the Ministry of Water and Environment, wanted to be more involved with WORIAs, resulting in a new government pledge for WORIA support. CSOs have also asked to share the experiences in different fora.

**WORIAs at the centre of research and development:** Usually concepts such as river and land management, climate change, and land degradation are considered complex for such a section of the community, but through the experiment, the lived experiences, and local knowledge, the WORIAs are now seen as empowered citizens who can be engaged in citizen science as observers and reporters.

**Riverpreneuership reduces pressure on the natural system and supports livelihoods:** The enterprises selected by the WORIAs to cocreate the river buffer zone management had good profit margins and met the needs of the natural system—we called this Riverpreneuership. This differs from the alternative income-generating activities that do not last because they only offer lower incomes.

## Most significant realisations

While a 12 month timeframe is limiting for changing behaviour and influencing system actors, the experiment flexibility allowed a process of learning, unlearning, and relearning. Through this process, we were able to **ignite a journey of community empowerment with a shared vision developed by the community themselves.** The WORIA community-embedded curriculum has helped to build three kinds of capacity: anticipatory, adaptive, and transformative. The proximity of the WORIAs to flood prone sites and the added value of their contribution to local knowledge for climate adaptation is a good basis for community-based adaptation planning and for building resilient communities.

We recognise that land degradation in search for livelihoods is one of the major drivers of risks of climatic hazards, and communities have been trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty-land degradation and vulnerability, exacerbated by a weak governance mechanism. With this status quo it can be difficult to break this vicious cycle. However, the **experiment's small incremental and complementary actions have brought us to a level of breaking this cycle, and the power to sustain this momentum lies with the WORIAs and their ability to influence actors in the system for good governance.**

Despite being often left out in many climate change and water resource management programs, **women have proved to be the most committed in implementing and sustaining climate change** and general environmental management initiatives. **We have built confidence that women are indeed important drivers of change in the context of sustainable river management.**

## Proposed way forward

We plan to develop products from this experiment into shareable formats including short courses with the WORIA community-embedded curriculum and videos from the WORIAs themselves.

The Mountains of the Moon University (located in the project area) plans to train the WORIAs to transmit data for the purpose of research on early warning and action. We are working with universities and other partners to develop fundable proposals for future WORIA engagement.

To make the best of the opportunity, we need to define an even more proactive role for the WORIAs in terms of self mobilisation and organisation around river management, include actors and sectors as consumers of the WORIA curriculum, and involve the private sector in creating the value chain to strengthen community benefits and incentive sustainable practices

The idea of WORIAs Plus+ depicts a situation where key actors are inherently part of the WORIA concept, not outsiders. We envision self mobilization and organization of the WORIAs at the tributaries that feed into the main River, which would deliver significant impacts at a landscape scale and demonstrate WORIAs become as citizen scientists making meaningful contributions.

# Key Insights from a year-long Sensemaking process

**Women Empowerment in River Land Management:**

The WORIA initiative played a critical role in empowering women to lead in managing the river-land interface. *"WORIA gave space for women to empower and come to the forefront for river land interface management,"* highlighting how the project successfully shifted leadership to women in this traditionally male-dominated area.

**School Management as a Tool for Change:**

Schools became pivotal in promoting women's initiatives. *"School management became a crucial tool for promoting women initiatives for river interface,"* reflecting how educational institutions supported the efforts to involve women in environmental management.

**Collaboration Through Access to Data:**

WORIA's access to relevant data was essential in fostering collaboration with scientists, government policymakers, and civil society. *"Access to relevant data for WORIA enables them to collaborate with science and government policymakers and other civil society,"* demonstrating the importance of information in driving effective partnerships.

**Government Support for Scaling the WORIA Model:**

The government has shown readiness to adopt the WORIA model as a grassroots tool for managing the river-land interface. *"Govt. prepared to adapt WORIA model as their grassroots tool for river land interface management,"* indicating potential for the initiative to be scaled and integrated into broader policy frameworks.

# Enhancing community on-farm seed storage through use of low cost and improved storage vessels and structures

| ⊙ Zambia Agricultural Research Institute (ZARI) | ⊙ Zambia |
|---|---|

## About Zambia Agricultural Research Institute

Zambia Agricultural Research Institute, from Zambia, aims to explore the potential for promoting effective on-farm seed storage through use of low-cost improved storage vessels, as well as establishing community seed banks in the local context. It also seeks to experiment with maintaining seed viability and vigor for open-pollinated seed varieties using different types of indigenous and improved low-cost storage environments in Zambia. Lastly, the project aims to innovate indigenous storage methods of iris potatoes, such as underground storage pits.

## Experiment Context

Local small-scale farmers struggle with weak markets for local crops, extinction of most local seed varieties, and limited capacity to cope with effects of climate change. Expensive hybrid seeds and seed systems not adapted to local ecosystems are forced on small-scale farmers, guided by government agricultural policy. Harvest and storage practices also lead farmers to lose seed viability and germination capacities due to pests. The current commercial agricultural production system and unfavorable government agricultural policy keeps affected farmer households at perpetual low-income levels leading to food and income insecurity. At the same time, small-scale farmers often want to stick to the indigenous ways of seed storage and fear around change.

This experiment has aimed to create seed banks that enable farmers to access affordable quality seeds adapted to their local ecosystem, build capacities in pest management, and enable a variety of appropriate storage technologies. It also has hoped to build markets for local produce, see a policy that will embrace local seeds and local produce, and create a platform for community development, all supporting improved food and income security and resilience.

## Learning, Unlearning, and Innovation

Before setting up the experiment, we engaged several players in agricultural seed production system including the Agricultural Field Services Department to **gain an understanding of the situation and how players could engage in problem solving.** We engaged with the local communities to experiment and learn together. We surveyed selected farmer communities, observing poor crop yields, local seed variety extinction, ineffective seed storage (for cereal, legumes, pulse seeds, and Irish potatoes). **The lack of local, affordable seeds** when **farmers need them results in food and income insecurity,** especially as many small-scale farmers cannot afford to purchase seeds from **agro-dealers at exorbitant prices.**

We engaged the Seed Certification and Control Institute (SCCI) to collaborate in farmer capacity building on seed production, post-harvest handling, and possible certification of locally produced seeds. We set up the experiment in three agro ecological regions of Zambia, each with two sites.

At this point we observed a lack of market for local open-pollinated varieties (OPV) crops grown by indigenous farmers, noting that local farmers' seeds were regarded as uncertified. In response, we secured locally grown OPV seeds to multiply and store as part of the experiment, and conducted farmer capacity building in seed production, postharvest handling, insect management, and storage. To respond to loss of up to 60% of Irish potato seeds due to inappropriate storage we created community seed bank committees to improve storage technologies **building on indigenous knowledge adapted to local conditions.**

To address the loss of local biodiversity, we initiated advocacy with policy institutions considering how to include marketing of local produce in the country's agricultural marketing system.

[1] Including the Crop Improvement and Agronomy (CIA); the National Genetic and Plant Resource Centre (Gene Bank), Postharvest Technology Unit; and the Seed Certification and Control Institute.

[2] Seeds for maize, sorghum, finger millet, beans, soya beans, groundnuts, and cowpeas.

## Most significant realisations

Our most significant realization is that the planting cycle (usually between November and January) being six months after the experiment grant period meant we were not ready quickly to proceed with storage and laboratory analysis in the community seed banks. Community seed banking structures would either have to be rented or better still permanently constructed for the experimentation sites and hopefully later in other localities. However, **from our experience, it is evident that it is possible to establish permanent community seed banks where farmers will be able to store their seeds as well as trade in seed locally.**

# Proposed way forward

We see many opportunities to continue and expand this work including:

Establishing farmer seed grower groups to grow and multiply various OPV seed varieties locally and link them to seed grower associations.  Further to possibly  lobby government owned FRA[?] to begin to trade in local produce from indigenous crop varieties .

Engaging the Genetic Resources Unit in identifying and accessing original germplasm of various local seeds and the multiplication of these.

Prototyping the experiment in other climate-vulnerable parts of the country in terms of crop production, seed, food and income security.

Engaging the wider society in adopting these innovations by disseminating our findings and facilitate technology adoption through publications, radio and TV programs, and piloting the project in other parts of the country.

Therefore; there will be a need to establish permanent infrastructure for community seed banks together with farmers, communities, and other partners. We see additional complementary opportunities, such as enhancing improved nutrition by encourage growing crops of nutrition and economical importance in collaboration with Ministry of Health's Nutrition Department and ZARI's farming systems unit.

✳ **Click here** to find out more about our 'Sensemaking' process

# Key Insights from a year-long Sensemaking process

**Empowering Farmers to Have a Voice:**

Early signs show that farmers, who previously lacked a voice, are now being heard and influencing the system. *"There are early signs of the farmers that did not have a voice to being heard and having an influence in the system,"* indicating a significant shift in the dynamics of agricultural decision-making.

**Trusting, Bottom-Up Relationships:**

The trusting relationships built from the ground up are a key factor in this transformation. *"How much the trusting relationship has come bottom-up,"* reflects the grassroots nature of these changes, where the farmers' knowledge is now "being taken as equal" to that of other stakeholders, showcasing a move towards more inclusive and equitable collaboration.

# Experimental approach to funding for systemic learning

| Systems Innovation Learning Programme (SILP) | Europe |
|---|---|

## About SILP

The Systemic Innovation Learning Partnership (SILP) is an approach designed to create innovation and systems change through an evolutionary, learning-by-doing design. SILP creates an inclusive, supportive, and community-driven environment that encourages experimentation, relationship-building, and authentic community building. By bringing together funders, experiment teams, and key system actors, SILP aspires to contribute to shifts in traditional dynamics and unlocking of potential for new ideas and results beyond conventional funding models. The approach is centered on shared humanity, trust, and vulnerability, which create a space for experimentation, joint problem-solving, and reflection. The result is an experience, that nurtures innovation, collective leadership, and systems change.

# Experiment Context

The development of the SILP Experimentation Fund brought a profound realisation: we are just as much a part of the experiment as the seven selected projects. When we began designing the Fund in September 2022, our goal was to challenge traditional funding models by embracing a novel, learning-centered approach. We aimed to support experiments driving systems change across diverse geographical, cultural, and socio-economic contexts. However, it wasn't just about the projects themselves—it was also about fostering new partnerships, developing emerging actors, and building a community of practice that transcends sectors and boundaries.

A pivotal element in this journey has been the recruitment of **Community Grantmakers.** In 2023, we introduced this team of locally embedded individuals to lead decision-making on how resources are allocated. This shift toward distributed power and participatory decision-making was a critical experiment in itself, allowing communities with direct experience to guide funding decisions. By empowering those on the ground, we are disrupting traditional funding hierarchies and pushing for greater equity and inclusivity in systems change processes.

As the Fund progressed, we challenged both practitioners and ourselves to experiment boldly with innovative solutions to complex challenges. This experimental approach extended to the design and implementation of the Fund itself—from the call for proposals to monitoring and reporting. Our ambition remains to reimagine traditional funding models by emphasising participatory decision-making and a commitment to learning.

A key aspect of this journey has been our commitment to self-reflection and adaptation. We set out to examine our own assumptions as a Global North funding organisation, acknowledging the biases within these structures. By incorporating distributive decision-making and collaborative processes through the Community Grantmakers, we are actively challenging conventional power dynamics in funding—aiming to support systems change not just through the projects we fund, but by transforming how development cooperation is structured.

In May 2023, we welcomed a cohort of seven grantees, each receiving between €50,000 and €100,000 to support their experiments. This marked the beginning of a year-long learning and sense-making process designed to capture insights not just from individual projects but from the portfolio as a whole. Our ambition is to co-create knowledge and foster mindset shifts that can lead to systemic impact.

SILP is still finding its place in the evolving landscape of international development and systemic change. As we continue to advance the partnership, we focus on deepening engagement through trust-based funding, prioritising empowerment, and embracing complexity. We also recognize the importance of developing accessible systems innovation by pioneering clearer communication, compelling storytelling, and practical examples of impact. Through this, we aim to shape new narratives of value and impact within the community as we navigate the ongoing experiment that is SILP.
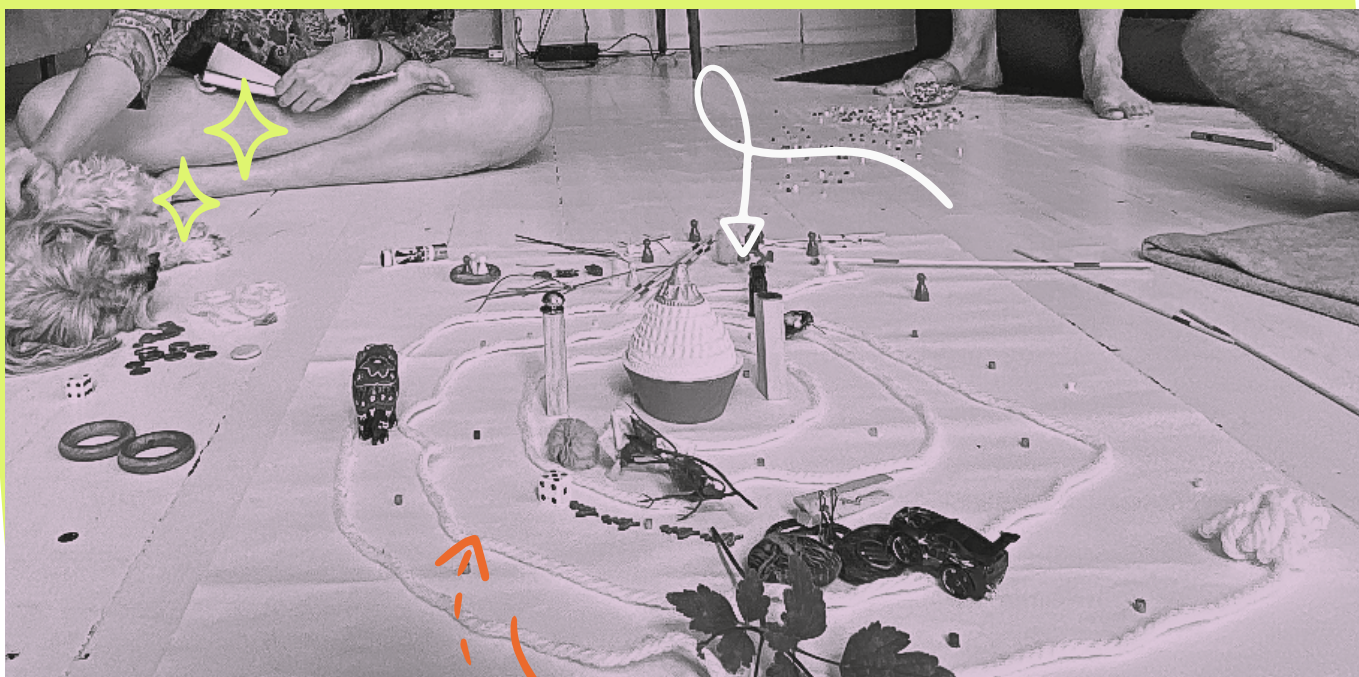
## Learnings and Unlearnings

One of the key learnings from the SILP experiment has been the importance of building relationships based on trust and shared humanity. These connections, established early on, created the foundation for innovation and collective action. We learned that creating a safe space for vulnerability—where we could share not only what was going well, but also the challenges we faced—was critical in fostering real systems change. SILP allowed us to practices collaboration and experimentation as iterative processes, alongside the other Experiments.

At the same time, we had to unlearn certain patterns and mindsets, particularly those rooted in traditional power dynamics. The top-down, prescriptive approaches we had become accustomed to were gradually being replaced with a more fluid, co-creative process. We realised that change is not always linear, and that embracing uncertainty and flexibility was essential in navigating the complexities of system transformation.

## Most significant realisations

One of the most significant realisations we've had is the power of co-creation with key stakeholders. Engaging actors throughout the process, rather than only at the planning stage, helped us to continuously adjust our approach and find solutions we hadn't imagined at the outset. A good example here can be the Community Grant Making mechanism, which allowed for representatives of impacted communities, rather than the funder, to select Experiments that received funding. These relationships, forged through collaboration and trust, were as powerful as the technical solutions themselves.

Another key realisation was that systems change takes time. While we've seen inspiring progress and even profound changes in some areas, we've come to understand that these journeys are long and nonlinear. There is no quick formula for shifting mindsets, institutions, or policies. However, the dynamics created by SILP's approach have sparked curiosity among some donors and stakeholders, signaling the potential for further cultural shifts.

## Proposed ways forward

Moving forward, it is clear that SILP's model has  great potential for empowering change within systems. Continuing to build relationships, creating trust, and creating spaces for vulnerability, experimentation and the practice of systemic approach should remain at the heart of this work. We propose deepening our engagement with key actors within the system, allowing for even more collaboration and co-creation to address emerging challenges.

We also recommend expanding this model to engage more funders, encouraging a shift from traditional funding approaches to ones based on trust, solidarity, and peer learning. This shift, while slow, is already gaining momentum, and we believe it could unlock even greater innovation and systems change in the future.

Finally, we need to remain committed to the long-term nature of this work. Systems change will continue to take time, and setbacks are inevitable. However, by staying rooted in the principles of shared humanity, collaboration, and flexibility, we are confident that this approach can create lasting and meaningful change across diverse contexts.

# Key Insights from a year-long Sensemaking process

The SILP approach is different, powerful, and timely. The evolutionary learning-by-doing design, supported by an inclusive and supportive process and community sensemaking helped to unlock innovation not imagined at the outset, and more results compared to traditional funding models.

**Strengthening Community Through Shared Humanity and Relationship Building:** The SILP approach, grounded in shared humanity and trust-building, fostered deep relationships among experiment teams, including the SILP team itself. This relational foundation not only enriched the overall experience but also encouraged teams to explore novel approaches that led to significant breakthroughs. The creation of a safer space for vulnerability, open sharing, collaborative problem-solving, and reflective sensemaking was instrumental in modeling and driving systems change.

**Redefining Funder-Experiment Team Dynamics:** SILP's innovative approach brought funders and experiment teams together as a single peer-learning community, shifting the dynamic from a 'top-down' model of prescribed solutions to one that promotes collaboration and the integration of diverse knowledge systems. While shifting these dynamics takes time, the SILP community has already demonstrated the powerful potential of this model, generating interest among other donors in adopting similar approaches.

**Systemic Engagement as a Catalyst for Change:** Understanding and engaging with key actors within each system was critical to the success of these experiments. The active involvement of stakeholders throughout the process enabled the co-creation of solutions, rapid iterations, and the removal of barriers, thereby preventing resistance to change and fostering 'win-win-win' outcomes that were not anticipated at the outset. These relationships, built through collaboration, have become powerful agents of change, with lasting potential beyond the duration of the experiments.

**Empowerment Through Relationship Building and Role Modeling:** Establishing trust and shared ownership with key actors provided a crucial entry point for systems change. In some cases, evolving power dynamics enabled new actors to lead and contribute to the system, fostering collective voice, agency, and action. This has demonstrated once again the power of example and lived experience, in which sometimes people need to see others succeed to feel empowered to take similar steps themselves.

**The Long Arc of Systems Change:** Each of the experiments within the SILP framework has achieved notable progress, underscoring that systems change is a gradual and ongoing process. While there is no one-size-fits-all formula for transforming mindsets, behaviours, institutions, policies, and systems, the progress observed, despite occasional setbacks, is promising. Several experiments have already achieved profound system-level changes, driven by the work created within the SILP community.

**Overall Impact:** The SILP experiment has inspired leadership, innovation, and solidarity across diverse contexts. It has demonstrated that a funding and support model rooted in trust and flexibility has the potential to empower meaningful change driven by actors within their unique systems. While the intention is not to directly compare this model to traditional funding approaches, the results suggest that the SILP approach holds significant potential for enabling the kinds of systemic change necessary in today's complex world.

# Overall Reflections on Systems Change

Across these eight experiments, several overarching themes emerged:

**Empowerment Through Community Engagement:** Many projects demonstrated the power of community-driven initiatives, particularly when marginalised groups (e.g., women, farmers) were empowered to lead. The ripple effects of this empowerment led to broader societal change, as seen in the Development Alternatives and WORIA experiments.

**Shifting Power Dynamics:** A recurring theme was the importance of altering traditional power structures. Whether in urban planning (NALED) or funding models (SILP), these projects highlighted the need to shift control towards local actors and communities to foster solidarity and sustainable systems change.

**Collaboration and Shared Responsibility:** Successful projects were those that fostered strong, trusting relationships among diverse stakeholders. The ability to "lean into tackling larger challenges" collectively, as seen in Railway Children India, allowed for more holistic solutions to emerge.

**Learning-Centred Approaches:** The emphasis on learning, adaptability, and reflection was a cornerstone of SILP's approach. By prioritising these elements, the experiments were able to generate meaningful insights and continue evolving even in the face of challenges like elections or scaling pressures.

We hope these experiments might provide some inspiration for others working in systems innovation, showcasing the potential of community empowerment, collaboration, and continuous learning to drive transformative change.
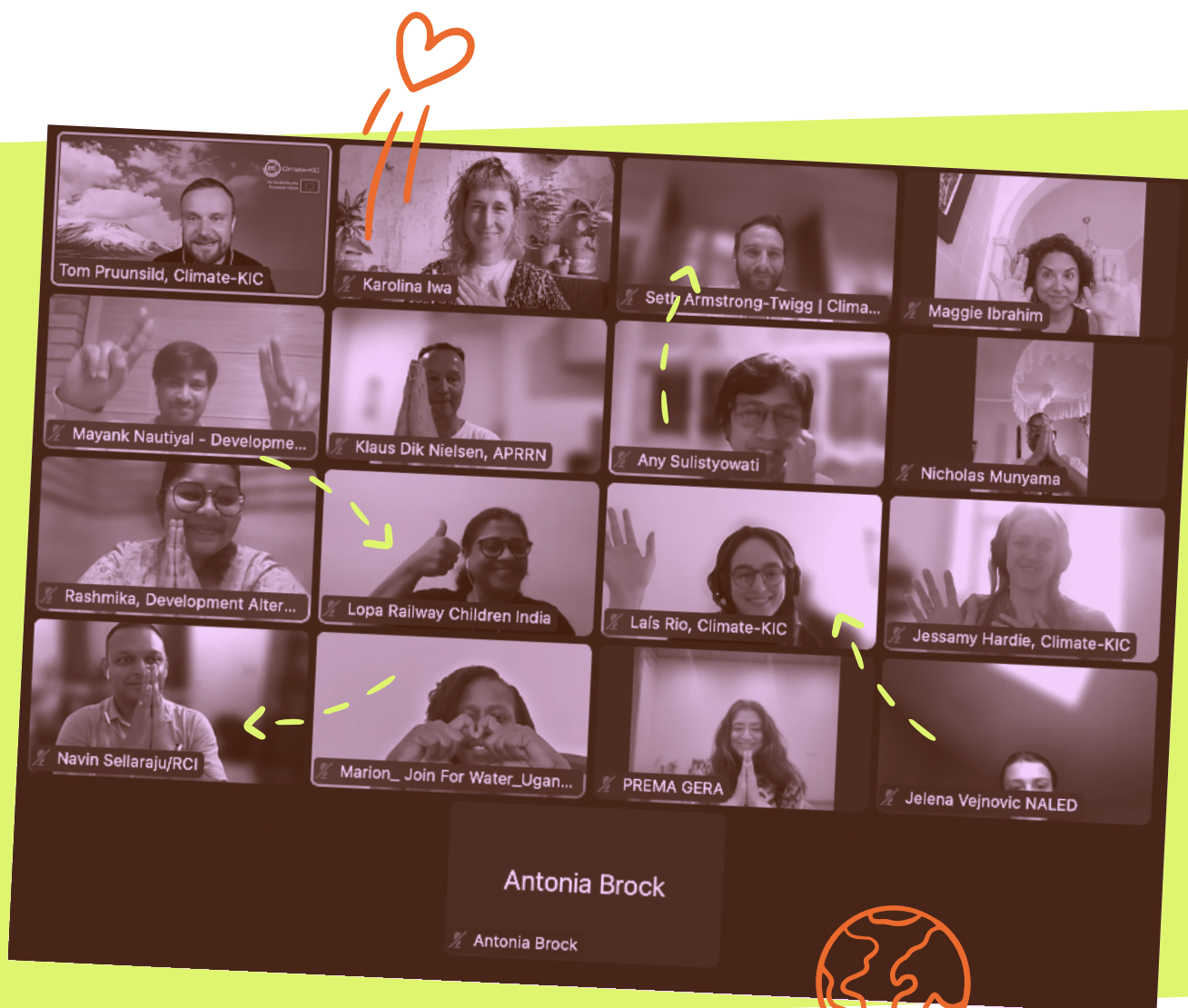
# What is Sensemaking?

**Sensemaking is a structured process of understanding complex, dynamic environments to enable adaptive decision-making and action.** It involves observation, reflection, synthesis, analysis, and pattern recognition to generate insights that support informed decisions. Within Climate-KIC, Sensemaking is not just about making sense of individual data points, but involves creating a shared understanding among stakeholders, enabling learning, and fostering collective action. This approach is key to navigating the complexity of climate action and accelerating systems change.

# Why is Sensemaking Important?

**In the context of Climate-KIC's mission to drive systems transformation towards a net-zero, climate-resilient, beautiful future, Sensemaking plays a crucial role.** It allows teams to access real-time learning from ongoing activities, identify systemic responses, and course-correct as necessary. As the challenges we face are often unpredictable and multi-dimensional, Sensemaking offers a way of developing a relationship with changing conditions, creating strategies that are fit for purpose, and building resilience across systems.

# Climate-KIC Sensemaking Process

**The Sensemaking process in Climate-KIC is structured around the "What-So What-Now What" sequence:**

**What? (Storytelling):** The process starts with the observation and collection of data, information, and stories from ongoing activities. Teams capture key events and signals from their systems, focusing on what is currently happening. This stage broadens collective awareness by looking both at the granular level and the broader system context.

**So What? (Most Significant Realisations):** In this stage, participants reflect on and interpret the gathered data to identify insights and patterns. They explore the significance of emerging trends and ask why these patterns matter. This stage helps to clarify the importance of observed changes, linking them to the overall system's goals.

**Now What? (Proposed Way Forward):** Finally, the Sensemaking process moves to action-oriented learning, where teams consider the practical implications of their insights. They decide on the next steps or strategic actions that should be taken to improve outcomes, address challenges, or accelerate progress toward their goals.

The process is highly collaborative, involving facilitated conversations among various stakeholders, from project teams to funders. The insights generated are then codified into strategic learning reports, which feed back into ongoing activities and inform future decisions.
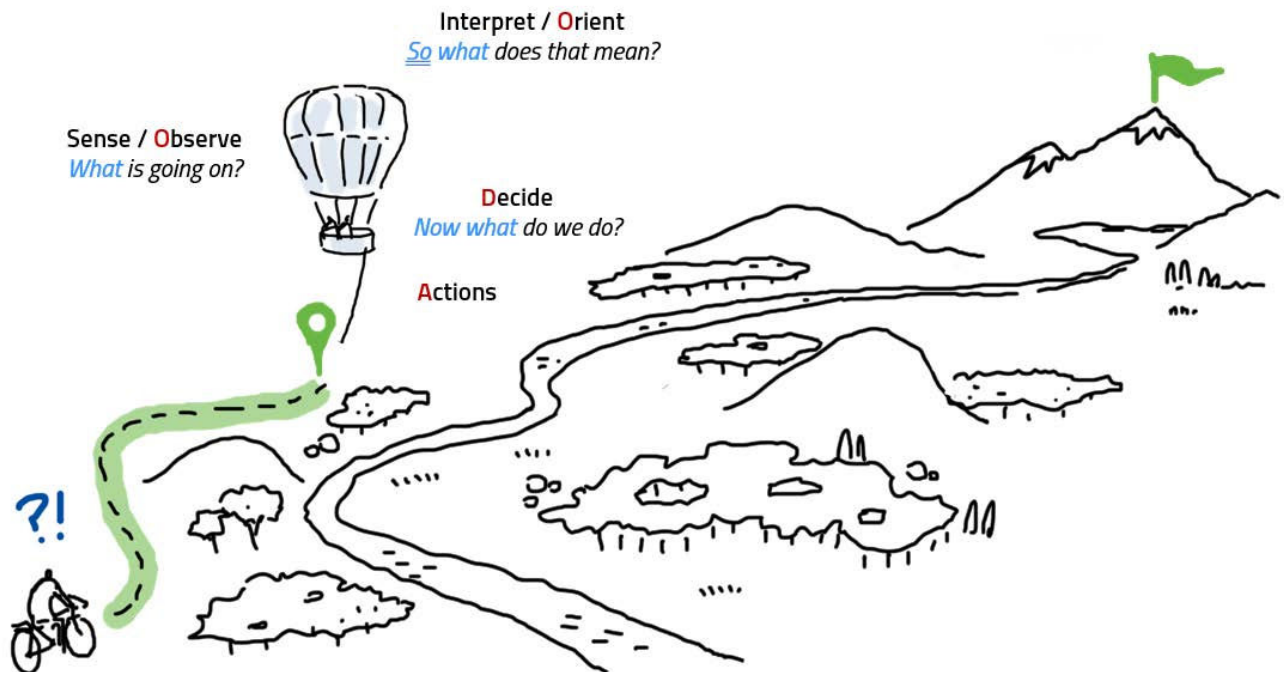
This cyclical approach to Sensemaking ensures that learning is continuous, helping projects adapt and innovate in response to real-world feedback while maintaining focus on long-term systemic change.

# Conclusion

Throughout the Systems Innovation Learning Partnership (SILP) and the journey of the Experimentation Fund, we applied the Sensemaking structure outlined above, while constantly adapting it to meet the evolving needs of our Cohort. A key element in this process was the role of storytelling, which served as a powerful tool for surfacing diverse perspectives, sharing lived experiences, and making sense of complex systems. By bringing individual stories into the collective, we were able to enrich our understanding of the systemic challenges we face. Regular Sensemaking sessions, paired with a conscious effort to slow down and create space for reflection, allowed the learning process to naturally unfold. As time passed, participating Experiments began to rely more and more on each other's shared learning to gain inspiration for their own ideas or for overcoming moments of "stuck". This flexibility in our approach resulted in the rich, actionable insights you have read in this report, deepening our collective understanding and informing our path forward in driving systemic change for climate action.



eit Climate-KIC

Sense / Observe
*What* is going on?

Interpret / Orient
*So* what does that mean?

Decide
*Now what* do we do?

Actions

?!

# SUMMARY OF COHORT I EXPERIMENTS

| Experiment | Statement of Purpose | Methods or Approach | Results | Conclusions |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network** (THAILAND \| ASIA-PACIFIC) | This study addresses the exclusion of local civil society, particularly Refugee-Led Organisations (RLOs) and individuals with lived experience of forced displacement, from leadership and decision-making spaces within the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) and broader human rights sectors. **It challenged traditional top-down power structures that limit refugee agency and hinder meaningful participation.** While previous research highlights the need for refugee inclusion, a gap remains in implementing co-leadership models that elevate refugees' roles. This experiment aimed to fill this gap by promoting equitable power-sharing between those with and without lived displacement experience. | **The experiment involved replacing APRRN's traditional single-leadership structure with a co-leadership model.** This shared leadership role was filled by two individuals, one with and one without lived experience of forced displacement. Stakeholder input was collected through surveys, and the Co-Secretary Generals attended events, consultations, and conferences across the Asia-Pacific region to promote this model and foster a united presence. **Internal discussions on power, privilege, and inclusion were facilitated to encourage learning and unlearning within the network.** | The experiment created several findings: Stakeholder surveys indicated general support for the co-leadership model, with many noting its potential to redistribute power and center refugee leadership. The presence of Co-Secretary General Hafsar, who had lived experience of displacement, at key events like the Asia Dialogue on Forced Migration was impactful. It raised the profile of APRRN's leadership approach and increased representation of refugees in critical discussions. Positive feedback from RLO members also highlighted a sense of increased safety and inclusion. Moreover, the model led to concrete changes, such as UNHCR agreeing to fund RLOs, marking a first in directly supporting frontline refugee-led work. | The findings **highlighted the importance of refugee-led leadership in transforming power dynamics** in humanitarian and human rights sectors. The experiment proved that meaningful refugee participation is achievable, but it requires sustained effort and structural changes. **APRRN's model demonstrated how decentralising leadership can empower people with lived experience of displacement,** while also showing the ongoing challenge of overcoming institutional resistance. By embedding refugee leadership into decision-making processes, this experiment paves the way for broader systemic shifts, addressing the research gap on the practical implementation of refugee-led co-leadership models. |
| **Development Alternatives** (INDIA) | This experiment was **conducted to address the economic and social disempowerment of women in India** due to limited mobility and male-dominated transportation systems. The initiative sought to explore the impact of e-mobility solutions on women's lives by establishing a network of women-led e-rickshaws. The goal was to empower women through entrepreneurship, enhance their mobility, and create a replicable, investible e-mobility model across India. **The research aimed to fill a gap in previous efforts that had not focused on how e-mobility could empower women economically and socially, while also addressing environmental concerns with green transportation solutions.** | The experiment involved co-creating a network of women-led e-rickshaws in Mirzapur, India. **The team facilitated the formation of "Aarya Groups" of women e-rickshaw drivers to foster solidarity, collaboration, and mutual support.** A broader platform, "Aarya Manch," brought together diverse system actors such as government agencies, financial institutions, and e-rickshaw vendors to co-create solutions for challenges faced by women drivers. **These efforts included the creation of an informal e-rickshaw driving academy, negotiations with local authorities for formal recognition of training certificates, and engagement with male stakeholders to support women's safe mobility.** | The experiment led to the formation of eight Aarya Groups with over 12 members each, enabling women drivers to support one another. The Aarya Manch platform facilitated collaboration between women drivers and key stakeholders, **resulting in various system improvements, such as the establishment of a driver training academy** and recognition of training certificates in lieu of formal licenses. Women entrepreneurs gained access to financing and resources for e-rickshaw businesses, while **schools signed agreements to allow women drivers to transport children.** The initiative also prompted a shift in male participation, with men offering support through reduced repair costs and free training. | **The experiment demonstrated that a women-led e-rickshaw network could drive significant economic and social empowerment, breaking traditional gender roles** and fostering community-based solutions. By **creating a space for collaboration and mutual support, women gained control over their assets and increased financial independence.** The project showed how such initiatives could inspire systemic change, with state governments expressing interest in replication. However, the findings also highlighted **the challenge of scaling while preserving the flexible, learning-centered approach that contributed to the project's success.** The initiative's emphasis on co-creation and solidarity offers a new model for empowering women through green mobility solutions across India. |
| **NALED** (SERBIA AND THE WESTERN BALKANS) | This experiment was aimed at addressing a **lack of citizen awareness and involvement in urban planning** processes in Serbia and the Western Balkans. The initiative sought to **empower citizens to contribute meaningfully to urban planning,** enabling them to express their needs and submit objections in a timely and legally valid manner. By **increasing transparency and citizen participation,** the experiment hoped to create a more inclusive urban planning process and reduce protests that often occur after construction begins. | The experiment involved d**eveloping and implementing a digital platform,** Be a Part of the Plan, which provided citizens with **timely information** about urban planning processes. The platform allowed them to access planning documents, receive updates, and submit objections electronically. To increase citizen capacity, the team distributed educational materials and guides to help citizens navigate the planning system. **The platform also facilitated communication between citizens, local authorities, and other key stakeholders.** | **The digital platform successfully increased transparency and citizen engagement in urban planning.** Educational materials and extensive promotion generated public interest, with over 20 local governments learning about the platform. Citizens began accessing planning documents online and submitting objections electronically, though legal barriers remained for formal digital submissions. **The initiative revealed that 86% of citizens had never participated in the planning process prior to the project,** highlighting the impact of the platform in fostering engagement. | **The experiment demonstrated that citizens are willing to engage in urban planning if given access to information and tools to do so.** The platform created a space for collaboration between citizens and authorities, fostering positive relationships. However, the initiative also **exposed challenges such as local government resistance to transparency and the need for legislative changes to fully enable electronic submissions.** Expanding and scaling the platform across Serbia would require further funding and legal amendments, but **the project offers a potential model for increasing citizen engagement in urban planning** across the region. |

| Experiment | Statement of Purpose | Methods or Approach |
|---|---|---|
| **Power Compost**<br><br>(COLOMBIA)<br><br> | The experiment **aimed to transform the organic waste system in Chía, Colombia, through collective learning and community-led action.** By integrating social, digital, and agroecological technologies, the project sought to foster collaboration among local stakeholders, enhance community participation, and **promote systemic change.** It also explored how this learning **experiment could align with local political cycles to ensure sustained progress in organic waste management.** | The approach focused on **building trust and collaboration within the community by involving a diverse range of stakeholders, including citizens, environmental leaders, schools, and businesses.** The project combined workshops, community outreach, and a digital platform to foster connections and develop a sense of shared responsibility for managing organic waste. **Flexibility and inclusivity were prioritised to engage the large diversity of actors present within the system.** Open communication channels and collaborative problem-solving were key components of the strategy, and **a bottom-up approach was adopted to empower community members to take ownership of the project.** |
| **Railway Children**<br><br>(INDIA)<br><br> | This study was conducted to explore **how the Indian Railway system can be leveraged as a protective net for unaccompanied vulnerable children traveling on trains or arriving at railway stations.** Despite existing child protection mechanisms, thousands of children were at risk, particularly on the Howrah-Delhi railway line, due to gaps in coordination between railway personnel and child protection units. The study aimed to address the limited involvement of District Child Protection Units (DCPUs) and provide a model for training railway staff to identify and protect vulnerable children **without relying solely on NGOs.** The research **aimed to fill the gap in ensuring system-wide, sustainable child protection within railway networks by integrating government stakeholders directly into the process.** | The approach involved **training railway personnel to identify and protect vulnerable children,** coordinating with DCPUs to facilitate reintegration with families, and piloting the initiative at two key locations (Patna and Ghaziabad). The experiment also involved assessing and updating station coordination protocols, conducting workshops with stakeholders, and using **real-time data tracking for children in need of protection.** By tailoring action plans to each pilot location's unique context, the team sought to **empower railway staff, raise awareness, and create a replicable model of child protection at railway stations.** |
| **Join for Water**<br><br>(UGANDA)<br><br> | The study aimed to **empower women as key drivers in sustainably managing the land-river interface** (LRI) of Uganda's Mpanga catchment. Growing environmental pressures from population growth, urbanisation, and climate change have degraded riverbanks and increased water-related conflicts. Despite their central role in household water and food management, **women have historically been excluded from decision-making.** The Women River Ambassadors (WORIAs) initiative sought to address this by equipping women to lead conservation efforts and community-based decision-making, demonstrating their potential to **drive systemic change in environmental management.** | The approach involved establishing WORIA groups and providing **training on river buffer zone management,** conservation practices, and financial literacy. These women-led groups collaborated with various community actors, including male counterparts, schools, and local leaders, to build consensus on sustainable practices. The initiative experimented with income-generating activities that align with environmental goals, coined as "Riverpreneuership." **It also fostered partnerships with government and civil society to ensure that WORIAs could hold duty-bearers accountable.** By using a community-embedded curriculum and **creating space for both men and women,** the project adapted to social barriers and **emphasised collective action.** |

| Results | Conclusions |
|---|---|
| **The project succeeded** by activating key lever points that paved the way for radical systemic transformation of the Organic Waste System in the municipality, emphasising the importance of relationships among local actors and transparency. Key outcomes included **enhanced community awareness, stronger connection between previously isolated actors, increased engagement from local environmental collectives,** and the consolidation of the four Portfolio Initiatives: a community-driven network that has now expanded beyond the project's initial scope, the Environmental Classrooms Network, the creation of **a digital platform to support ongoing collaboration**, and the development of a Policy Brief to aid local efforts. While the project encountered challenges engaging government and business stakeholders, this first iteration allowed the transformation process to gain momentum, with the community at the forefront of driving systemic change, ensuring efforts will continue to grow and evolve. | The experiment **revealed the transformative power of community ownership** in driving sustainable change. **Shifting from a top-down approach to one that empowered local stakeholders** allowed the organic waste system to become more resilient and effective. The project highlighted the **importance of understanding local context, building trust, and facilitating community-led initiatives.** However, to fully achieve systemic transformation, **greater involvement from government and business actors, and consistent iteration will be needed,** alongside local public policies that support a circular economy. |
| The study revealed that **railway personnel, when trained and supported, can play a crucial role in protecting vulnerable children.** In locations like Patna, where DCPUs were initially passive, the project led to increased ownership by government agencies, enhancing coordination and responsiveness to child protection needs. **The revised station coordination protocols and hands-on involvement improved child protection efforts**. The project also highlighted the importance of maintaining real-time data for effective intervention. Furthermore, engaging railway personnel led to increased awareness and their active participation in protecting children during train journeys and at stations. | The findings underscored **the importance of empowering existing system components,** such as railway personnel and DCPUs, to take ownership of child protection, reducing reliance on intermediary organisations. This shift fostered greater collaboration within the railway system, showing that child protection can be significantly enhanced by activating and coordinating existing mechanisms. **The project provided a model for systemic change within the Indian Railways that could be scaled across the network.** It addressed gaps in child protection by demonstrating that a converged, preventive approach within the railway system can sustainably protect vulnerable children. **The project's success has broader implications for public systems in India, showcasing the potential of government-led, cross-sectoral collaboration in child welfare.** |
| The experiment revealed that WORIAs **became effective agents of change, particularly through initiatives like river buffer zone management and community awareness activities.** The inclusion of male champions addressed gender dynamics, while the integration of financial literacy through the Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) empowered women economically and socially. WORIAs also developed innovative ways to raise awareness, such as composing anthems and skits. Government agencies and civil society actors, recognising the value of WORIA efforts, pledged support for their initiatives. Furthermore, the involvement of WORIAs in data collection for environmental management **demonstrated the potential of citizen science led by women.** | **The study highlighted the pivotal role of women in environmental management and community resilience.** WORIAs not only addressed environmental degradation but also strengthened community collaboration, breaking cycles of poverty and land degradation. **The initiative demonstrated that women, when empowered, can lead systemic change, influencing governance and policy for sustainable river management.** The project's flexibility allowed for adaptive learning and engagement, fostering a shared vision for environmental stewardship. The success of WORIAs in mobilising communities and collaborating with government actors has broader implications for scaling similar grassroots initiatives across Uganda and beyond. |

| Experiment | Statement of Purpose | Methods or Approach | Results | Conclusions |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Zambia Agricultural Research Institute** <br><br> **(ZAMBIA)** <br><br>  | The **experiment sought to improve on-farm seed storage practices among small-scale farmers in Zambia** through the use of low-cost, improved storage vessels and the establishment of community seed banks. By focusing on maintaining seed viability and vigor for open-pollinated seed varieties (OPVs) and indigenous crops like Irish potatoes, the project aimed to support local farmers in overcoming challenges related to seed storage, pest management, and access to affordable seeds. Ultimately, **the goal was to enhance food and income security, promote biodiversity, and develop sustainable, community-driven solutions for seed storage and agricultural resilience.** | The approach involved **engaging local farmers and agricultural stakeholders to experiment with different seed storage methods and environments, incorporating both indigenous and improved techniques.** The project collaborated with the Seed Certification and Control Institute (SCCI) to build farmers' capacity in seed production, post-harvest handling, and certification processes. Community seed bank committees were established to oversee seed storage and promote the adoption of improved technologies. In response to the extinction of local seed varieties and poor crop yields, the project secured locally grown OPV seeds for multiplication and storage. **It also introduced advocacy efforts to influence agricultural policy,** aiming to include local produce and seed varieties in the national marketing system. | The experiment revealed **significant improvements in seed storage practices and seed viability.** The community seed banks provided a secure environment for storing OPV seeds and indigenous crops, reducing post-harvest losses. For instance, improved storage techniques **helped address the loss of up to 60% of Irish potato seeds.** Additionally, the initiative empowered farmers by building their capacity to manage seed production and pest control, giving them more autonomy over their agricultural practices. **Early signs indicated that farmers, who previously lacked a voice in the agricultural system, were now influencing decision-making processes.** The project also demonstrated that it was feasible to establish permanent community seed banks, which could serve as local hubs for seed storage and trade. | The **study highlighted the potential of low-cost seed storage solutions and community seed banks in improving seed viability and resilience among small-scale farmers in Zambia.** By involving farmers in decision-making and providing them with the tools and knowledge to manage their seeds, the initiative fostered a sense of ownership and empowerment. The project also underscored **the importance of preserving local seed varieties and integrating indigenous knowledge into modern agricultural practices.** Advocacy efforts aimed at influencing policy showed promise, as **farmers began to see their role in shaping agricultural systems.** The experiment laid the groundwork for expanding seed banks and seed grower associations, ensuring sustainable seed access for vulnerable farming communities. |
| **SILP** <br><br> **(EUROPE)** | The Systemic Innovation Learning Partnership (SILP) aims to **create systems change through a collaborative, learning-centered approach.** By rethinking traditional funding models, SILP encourages experimentation, trust-building, and co-creation with funders, experiment teams, and other key actors. The partnership's **purpose is to promote new forms of innovation, collective leadership, and systems transformation by shifting the focus to shared humanity, distributed power, and participatory decision-making.** | SILP's method revolves around a **learning-by-doing framework, designed to create a supportive environment for experimentation and community engagement.** The Experimentation Fund, launched in 2022, sought to **disrupt traditional funding by focusing on distributed power, flexible decision-making, and collaboration with impacted communities.** SILP brought together a cohort of seven grantees in May 2023, providing between €50,000 and €100,000 to each to pursue systems change experiments. Key components of SILP's approach include trust-based funding, community grant-making, and a commitment to iterative learning. Throughout the process, SILP's focus was on self-reflection, adaptability, and challenging conventional power dynamics. | SILP's approach led to **profound shifts in how funding** relationships and systemic innovation are conceived. Grantees formed strong, trust-based relationships, which allowed for more open collaboration and the exploration of bold solutions to complex challenges. The community grant-making mechanism, where representatives of impacted communities selected projects for funding, **demonstrated the effectiveness of co-creation in addressing local needs.** Significant breakthroughs were achieved, including early signs of systems change, such as shifts in power dynamics and deeper stakeholder engagement. **However, SILP also recognised that meaningful change is non-linear and requires time.** | The SILP experiment **revealed the power of co-creation,** trust-building, and shared ownership in achieving systems change. By breaking away from traditional top-down funding models and creating collaborative relationships among funders, experiment teams, and key actors, SILP created conditions for innovation that would not have emerged through more prescriptive approaches. **The importance of relationships rooted in shared humanity, vulnerability, and trust was stressed as essential to driving transformation.** SILP demonstrated that **systems change is a gradual process, requiring continuous adaptation,** but it has already begun to shift mindsets, behaviours, and institutions within participating communities. |

# Get in Touch

We're excited to connect with individuals and organisations who share our passion for climate innovation and system transformation. Whether you're interested in learning more about the SILP experiments, engaging with our cohorts, or collaborating with Climate-KIC and Sida, we'd love to hear from you.

## Contact the SILP Cohorts

Want to reach out to one of the experiment participants or cohorts? Whether you're looking for collaboration opportunities, insights into their projects, or more details on their work, we're here to facilitate the connection. Email: **silp@climate-kic.org** and we'll direct your inquiry to the right person or team.

# Reach Climate-KIC

If you have questions about Climate-KIC's mission, upcoming projects, or partnership opportunities, please get in touch with us. We're always eager to explore new avenues for collaboration and innovation.

**info@climate-kic.org**   f  X  ⊙  in

# Contact Sida

For inquiries related to Sida's work in climate action and development, or to explore potential partnerships, please contact us at the details below.

**info@sida.se**  •  **www.sida.se/en**