

RESILIENCE TRAJECTORIES

Exploring what might help climate civil society actors to better weather the discontinuity ahead and amplify our impact.

**RESOURCE PACK FOR
FELLOW EXPLORERS**

**FORUM
FOR THE
FUTURE**

WELCOME!

This resource pack has been compiled as part of the Resilience Trajectories initiative run by Forum for the Future and kindly funded by the MacArthur Foundation in 2020-21.

Forum for the Future is a leading international sustainability non-profit. For 25 years we've been working in partnership with business, governments and civil society to accelerate transformation toward a just and regenerative future. Through our programmes we are actively catalysing change on key global challenges and building the capacity of individuals and organisations to act more systemically. The interconnected global challenges we are working on currently are: climate and energy, sustainable food systems, and sustainable value chains and livelihoods.

The design for this resource pack was done by Saskia Rysenbry
The illustrations are the amazing work of Anisha Thampy

The organisations that took part in the Resilience Trajectories initiative include: Ashoka Trust For Research In Ecology And The Environment (ATREE), CDP- India, Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA), Centre for Responsible Business (CRB), Climate Group, Climate Policy Initiative (CPI), Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW), Centre for Policy Research (CPR), Development Alternatives (DA), EcoFriends Community & Ashoka, Foundation for Ecological Security (FES), Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA), Initiative for Climate Action (ICA), Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC), International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), LEAD at Krea University, Purpose, The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Vasudha Foundation, World Resources Institute (WRI), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)

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For more information on this initiative please contact Hansika Singh on h.singh@forumforthefuture.org

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INTRODUCTION

Resilience, both during and as we emerge from the effects of COVID-19, is at the top of most organisation's priority list. To build resilience, you need to understand what risks and opportunities may emerge as the future evolves, and be ready for them. But our complex future is more impossible than ever to predict or prepare for. How will we live with COVID-19? How will we move forward, globally and nationally?

Forum for the Future, supported by the MacArthur Foundation, has been facilitating a participatory process for climate action civil society organisations (CSOs) in India, in order to explore the different possible trajectories we could take out of COVID-19 and to prepare in such a way that builds resilience and amplifies collective impact given the trends impacting the civil society space. As the pandemic and various other recent shocks have shown the sector, we need to address the gaps in resilience, as well as the need to address climate change through a social justice lens.

Together, we have been applying Futures and systems thinking approaches to explore questions such as: What shocks or risks could lie ahead? How can we be better prepared moving forward? How can we build resilience in others?

Here we would like to share the process we have undertaken to date. We encourage you to use these tools and approaches either to facilitate strategic conversations in your organisation, or with partners you work with. We'd love to hear any insights you might have on both what is most needed to support the resilience building of the wider ecosystem of climate action CSOs in India, as well as any reflections on the tools or process. Please share any reflections through this short form.

'We need to do everything we can to ensure all types of actors can make their contribution to tackling the climate emergency. Civil society is an important one and therefore India's climate resilience is deeply dependent on the resilience of the climate civil society space.'

Jarnail Singh

Deputy Director (India), MacArthur Foundation

PURPOSE OF THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit codifies the process we designed for the exploration of resilience trajectories for climate action CSOs in India. When embarking on any exploratory process, there are a myriad of tools, approaches and methods that can be used depending on the type of process, duration, or scope.

For this reason, we are only sharing the tools and approaches we used in this particular exploration - so therefore this is not an exhaustive series of futures or systems thinking tools and methods.



WHY RESILIENCE TRAJECTORIES?

We find ourselves in a period of sudden and deep discontinuity. The COVID-19 pandemic has quickly taken hold across the globe, with social, environmental and economic consequences that compound day by day. But this is not the only disruption we are facing. We find ourselves at the nexus of multiple trends with the potential to transform how we live, work and coexist. Many are saying that the COVID-19 disruption - the sudden reassessment of priorities and wide range of impacts - is small compared to what climate change is beginning to bring for instance.

India has deeply felt the brunt of the pandemic. The health system in many states became overwhelmed, what safety nets exist for the vulnerable looked increasingly precarious, and the economy is sputtering with worsening unemployment. Food security and supply chains face serious disruptions. We see reverse migration on a massive scale at high cost to health and life. Just as climate change threatens to do, there are signs the pandemic is increasing inequality on many levels.



WHY RESILIENCE TRAJECTORIES?

Whilst attempts are being made to tackle the challenges so that India and the individual states can ride the storm, we are not yet on a stable, predictable course, nor do we know when, or even if, that might happen. When considered with other sources of disruption, it is clear that we have entered a time of deep discontinuity that has no foreseeable end.

This context makes the already challenging job of civil society organisations (CSOs) in India even more difficult. Many have had to 'pivot' to urgent priorities in their networks and communities. Most have experienced substantial disruption, with plans on the ground being hardest hit. In some cases, years of work are on hiatus, or worse still, undone, as political and corporate priorities change and communities do what they need in order to survive. Whilst staying afloat is the immediate priority, being able to navigate the head winds in the short term and ensuring resilience for future storms in the medium to long term are essential for all CSOs should they wish to have continuing impact.

For CSOs focused on climate change, including those working towards a 'just transition', this unpredictability is raising significant questions, operationally and strategically. How can we ensure our strategies will still have impact over time given the constantly shifting context and the chronic nature of the climate emergency in India and globally? What does the changing role of civil society in India through this crisis mean for our role as a community and as individual organisations going forward? How can we build our own resilience at the same time as building that in others? And importantly, what does this tell us about how we can have greater collective impact on mitigating and planning for climate change? How might we use this moment to catalyse transformation?

Very few climate-related CSOs have the time or structured support required to think their current and future operations and impacts through, and even fewer have time to do this as a collective. Resources are tighter than ever, and organisations are primarily focused on maintaining momentum or replanning programmes. The conferences and events that allowed for the sharing of information and collaborative conversations in refreshment queues are no longer happening.

OUR OBJECTIVES

With this context in mind, we set off to design a process that would convene approximately 30-40 climate change related CSOs in India to navigate the uncertainty instigated and / or exacerbated by COVID-19 and deliver on their missions by:

- Supporting CSOs in exploring responses to the risks and opportunities for their programmes and organisations in each trajectory, thus increasing their resilience and enabling continued impact;
- Developing a shared vision of resilience for the climate action civil society sector, and thus creating a shared sense of direction and understanding of how each organisation contributes and aligns to the wider systemic goal;
- Collectively identifying the priority strategic questions that arise from this discontinuity and its learnings, and potential responses that will enable greater impact, identifying those most ripe for collective action within and beyond the CSO community, ready to be taken forward in subsequent initiatives.



OVERVIEW OF OUR PROCESS

In order to achieve the objectives, we undertook the following process (also visualised in the diagram on the right), split into two phases: **Exploration** (Diverge) and **Sensemaking** (Converge). Here's an overview of what they each consisted of:

EXPLORATION (DIVERGE)

1. **Kick off:** creating a shared set of expectations and ways of working.
2. **Systemic diagnosis:** interviews, small group discussions and facilitated online workshops designed to develop a deep understanding of the climate action civil society landscape in India before COVID-19, how that has changed given the drivers at play and how it might evolve in the future. We explored what factors are enabling or challenging resilience in the sector. Here we adapted a set of trajectories based on a global exploration we undertook at Forum for the Future and which centre on four different mindsets / world views.

MINDSETS / WORLD VIEWS

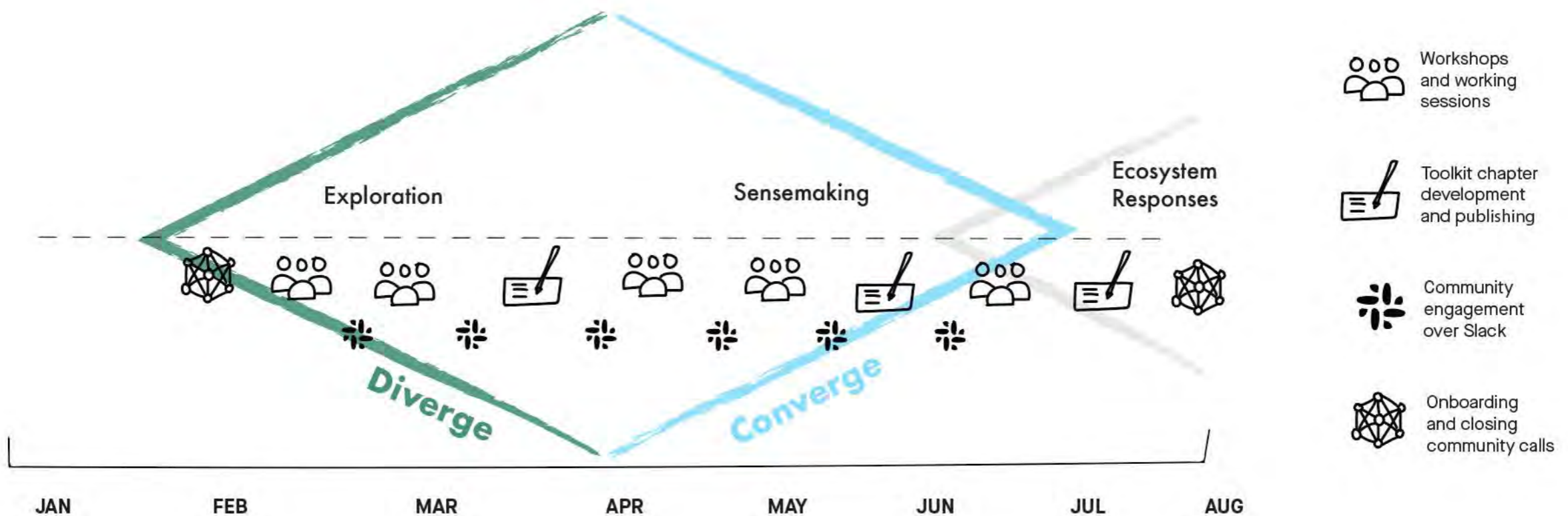
- **Disciplined:** greater control is required to maintain public health, safety and security and, just as importantly, keep growth and global interconnection going. We are prepared to relinquish privacy concerns for this.
- **Transform:** planetary health is human health and our fates are deeply interconnected. Deep change is actually possible, desirable and happening. We can't go back to 'before'.
- **Compete & Retreat:** there is not enough to share. We must retreat to protect our own kind, and must prevail over the others. Others winning means less for us.
- **Unsettled:** disruption and discontinuity (climate, ecological, political, technological) will continue. We operate in permanent volatility.

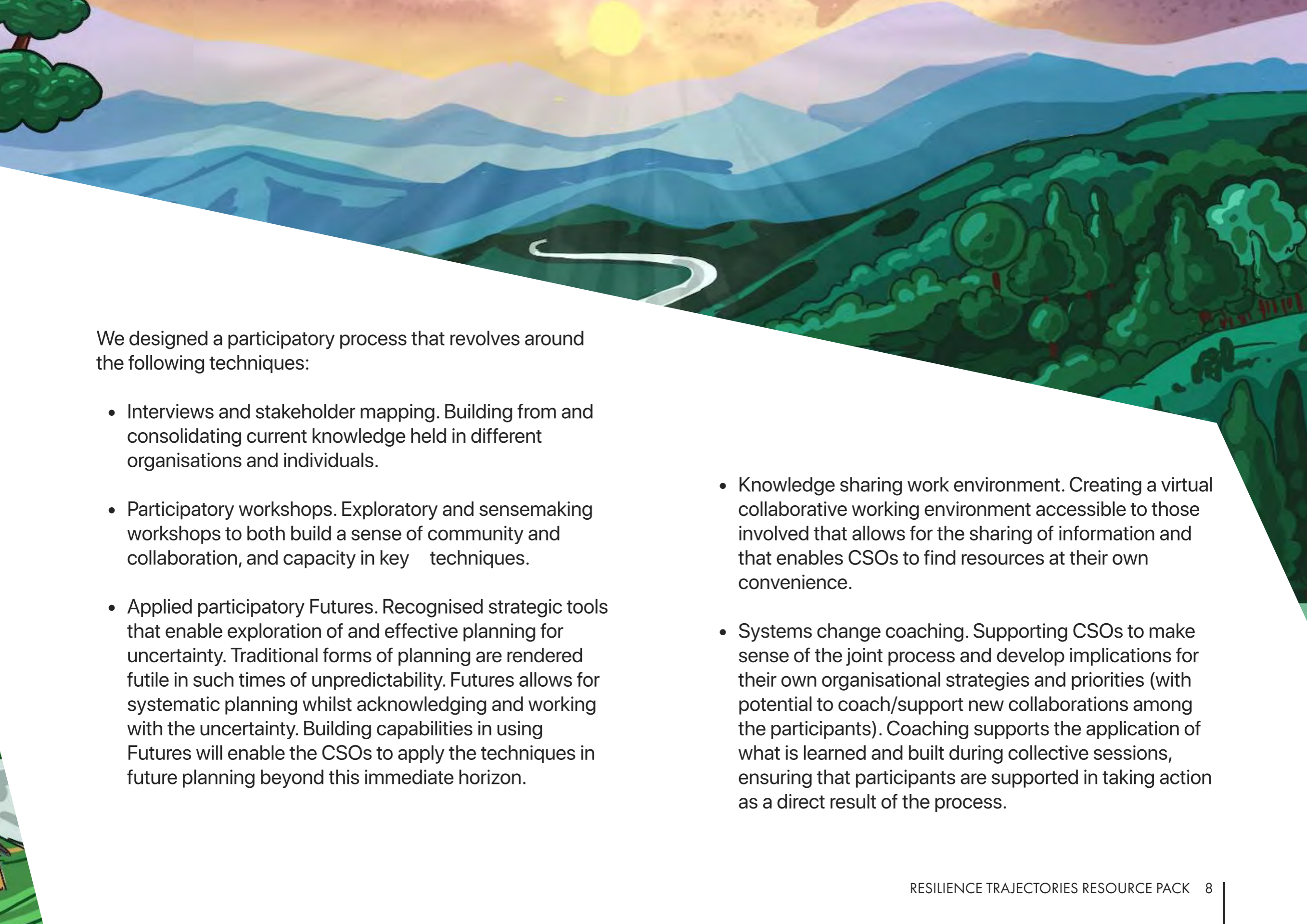
SENSEMAKING (CONVERGE)

1. Facilitated online workshops to enable us to collectively understand the implications of the trajectories and corresponding possible changes in the landscape for the sector, to set out a vision of a resilient climate action sector, and to identify ways we can bring it about.

2. Peer to peer action learning: Small groups convened around a key area they wish to further explore and were supported through light touch systems change coaching sessions to explore the implications of the exploration thus far for their own initiatives, programmes and strategies. Some sessions were structured, whilst others allowed space for the community to bring and discuss what they needed to.

3. Ecosystem responses: A final online workshop to consolidate learning on how to build resilience in individual CSOs and the sector as a whole in a manner that ensures continuing impact, to develop collective interventions that move towards the vision to the stage where they can be explored for funding and with further collaborators, and explore how the community can live on beyond the structured process from which it was catalysed.





We designed a participatory process that revolves around the following techniques:

- Interviews and stakeholder mapping. Building from and consolidating current knowledge held in different organisations and individuals.
- Participatory workshops. Exploratory and sensemaking workshops to both build a sense of community and collaboration, and capacity in key techniques.
- Applied participatory Futures. Recognised strategic tools that enable exploration of and effective planning for uncertainty. Traditional forms of planning are rendered futile in such times of unpredictability. Futures allows for systematic planning whilst acknowledging and working with the uncertainty. Building capabilities in using Futures will enable the CSOs to apply the techniques in future planning beyond this immediate horizon.
- Knowledge sharing work environment. Creating a virtual collaborative working environment accessible to those involved that allows for the sharing of information and that enables CSOs to find resources at their own convenience.
- Systems change coaching. Supporting CSOs to make sense of the joint process and develop implications for their own organisational strategies and priorities (with potential to coach/support new collaborations among the participants). Coaching supports the application of what is learned and built during collective sessions, ensuring that participants are supported in taking action as a direct result of the process.

EXPLORATION (DIVERGE)



Duration: 2-3 months, depending how much time you want to dedicate / how big your group or collective is.



Optimal number of participants: Minimum 3 participants and one facilitator, although larger numbers can easily be accommodated. Our process involved 30 participants and 3-4 facilitators.



Key methods: survey, interviews, participatory workshops



Technical requirements: While the interviews can be conducted over the phone, for the workshops it is ideal that participants join from a laptop and have access to a webcam. We have used Zoom for the workshops and Miro as a collaborative online workshop board, though there are many alternatives.

PURPOSE OF THIS PHASE

In this phase, we sought to explore the different factors and dynamics that are shaping the context within which CSOs operate. We explored the following key questions:

What are the current and future dynamics in the climate action sphere in India?

- What are the enabling forces helping climate action CSOs thrive?
- What are the resisting forces or challenges faced by climate action CSOs in India?

What are different ways in which climate CSOs define or determine resilience?

- What types of resilience have we seen during the pandemic?

What signals are we seeing that point to the different resilience trajectories?

- What role do we see climate action CSOs play to create a resilient civil society system and amplify impact?
- How might these trends shift over time? Which direction are we likely to go?
- What is telling us that these trends/forces might change in the short/medium/long term?

WHAT WE DID - A SUGGESTED APPROACH

In order to develop a systemic diagnosis of the current and potential resilience trajectories, our process included the following methods:

- We designed an entry survey to develop a picture of the current baseline, understand the motivations of the participants, as well as what they currently see as barriers and opportunities to their organisational and sectoral resilience.
- We designed an interview guide and drew a longlist of stakeholders from the wider CSO ecosystem, including within and beyond the participants in this process. The purpose of the interviews was to complement and dig deeper into the insights developed from the survey and workshops.
- We designed and facilitated two participatory workshops. The first one focused on the recent past and present dynamics, while in the second workshops we looked forward to possible future resilience trajectories.

- We supplemented these methods with a review of the grey literature of recent reports produced by organisations such as Civicus, to provide an international perspective on the insights on sectoral resilience we uncovered in the Indian context.

To analyse the data and identify the diagnosis dynamics, we have used a combination of systems thinking methods, such as Causal Loop Diagrams and System Archetypes.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS BEFORE YOU START

Some of the things you will explore might take you out of your comfort zone, taking you deeper into how you work with others, and our individual and collective leadership. Whether you do this in your team, your organisation, or with other partners, you need to create a supportive learning environment, so we have included some (optional) reflection questions to consider before you start:

- What do you wish to get out of this journey? What will make it feel like it was worth your time?
- What are you bringing to this journey?
- Thinking of your working style, how do you like to work best, especially in collaborative environments? What works or what doesn't work for you?
- What might be holding you back from fully participating?
- What time do you have available for this and how can you ensure you get the most out of this process?

RESOURCES TO GET YOU STARTED

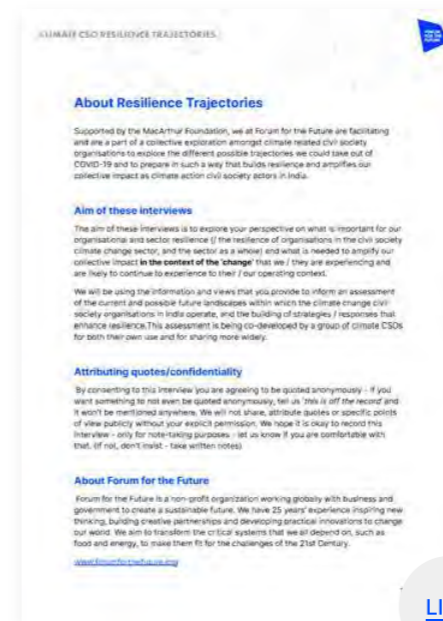
Welcome pack
to share with participants



Pre-read & sample agenda
Workshop 1: Present Diagnosis



Interview Guide



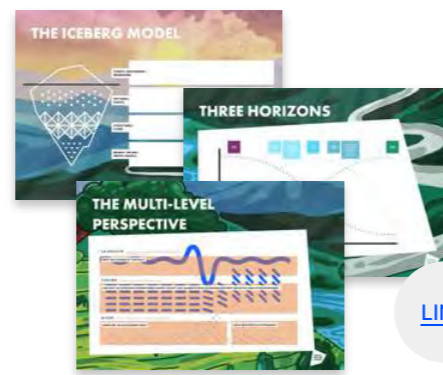
Pre-read & Sample Agenda
Workshop 2: Future Trajectories



Welcome & onboarding
worksheets



Diagnosis
worksheets



Reflection
worksheet



Resilience Trajectories
worksheets



A stylized illustration of a landscape with rolling green hills, a large tree, a house, and a globe. The scene is rendered in a vibrant, cartoonish style with bold outlines and a rich color palette of greens, yellows, and blues. A large tree trunk is visible on the left, and a house with a blue roof is on the right. A globe is positioned in the center of the landscape. The overall composition is dynamic and visually engaging.

SUGGESTED READINGS AT THIS STAGE

If you want to explore some of these issues through a few readings, here are a few recommendations:

- [Our Future of Sustainability 2020 Report](#)
- [Our framework of five core capabilities for system change](#)
- [Dancing with Systems](#) by Donella Meadows
- [The Dawn of Systems Leadership](#) by Peter Senge, Hal Hamilton, & John Kania:
- [Systems Practice Mindset Video](#) The Omidyar Group
- You might also enjoy some of the articles on our [School of System Change blog](#).

In addition to these readings, we recommend our following short videos on system change. They provide a preview of some of the tools we have used in this process:

- [Systems do change: the story of Rock 'n' Roll](#)
- [Systems do change: a story of the civil rights movement](#)

SENSEMAKING (CONVERGE)

PURPOSE OF THIS PHASE

While in the exploration phase our purpose was to diverge and explore the key barriers, opportunities and factors that might enable a resilient CSO ecosystem, the purpose of this second phase was to start identifying key strategies for intervention and potential actions or inquiries to help build our resilience. In this convergent phase, we started codifying our insights and building on the key areas we have identified as dynamic (and therefore full of potential for action).



Duration: 1-3 months depending on the size of your group or collective and available time you have



Optimal number of participants: Minimum 3 participants and one facilitator, although larger numbers can easily be accommodated. Our process involved 30 participants and 3-4 facilitators.



Key methods: participatory workshops



Technical requirements: For the workshops it is ideal that participants join from a laptop and have access to a webcam. We have used Zoom for the workshops and Miro as a collaborative online workshop board, though there are many alternatives.

WHAT WE DID – A SUGGESTED APPROACH

We built on the insights and findings from the first phase by:

- Creating a short pre-read for our third participatory workshop, under the theme *The Future We Want*. It contained the key findings from the Exploration phase so we could pick up directly where we left off.
- Designing and facilitating a *The Future We Want* workshop in order to envision the characteristics of a resilient climate action sector.
- Developing a simple tool, the Resilience Wheel, to help map the different ways we could move forward towards the vision, given our shared diagnosis from the Exploration phase.
- Facilitating a fourth workshop where we explored what the Leverage Points are for building the characteristics within our vision and started getting specific about our shared responses. Following this workshop, we split into smaller inquiry groups which each took one key exploratory question.
- Each group went through a process of idea generation for possible interventions that would build up the vision characteristics. These ideas were then prioritised using a set of criteria, and the prioritised concept was developed.
- We came back together for a final workshop five, where we shared the different concepts and started exploring timelines and decision making processes that could help these to happen.
- We agreed to co-facilitate a shared learning event, where we wanted to invite the stakeholders from the next circle out – those we work with or our funders, who hadn't been involved at all in this process.



SEVEN DYNAMIC AREAS FOR INTERVENTION

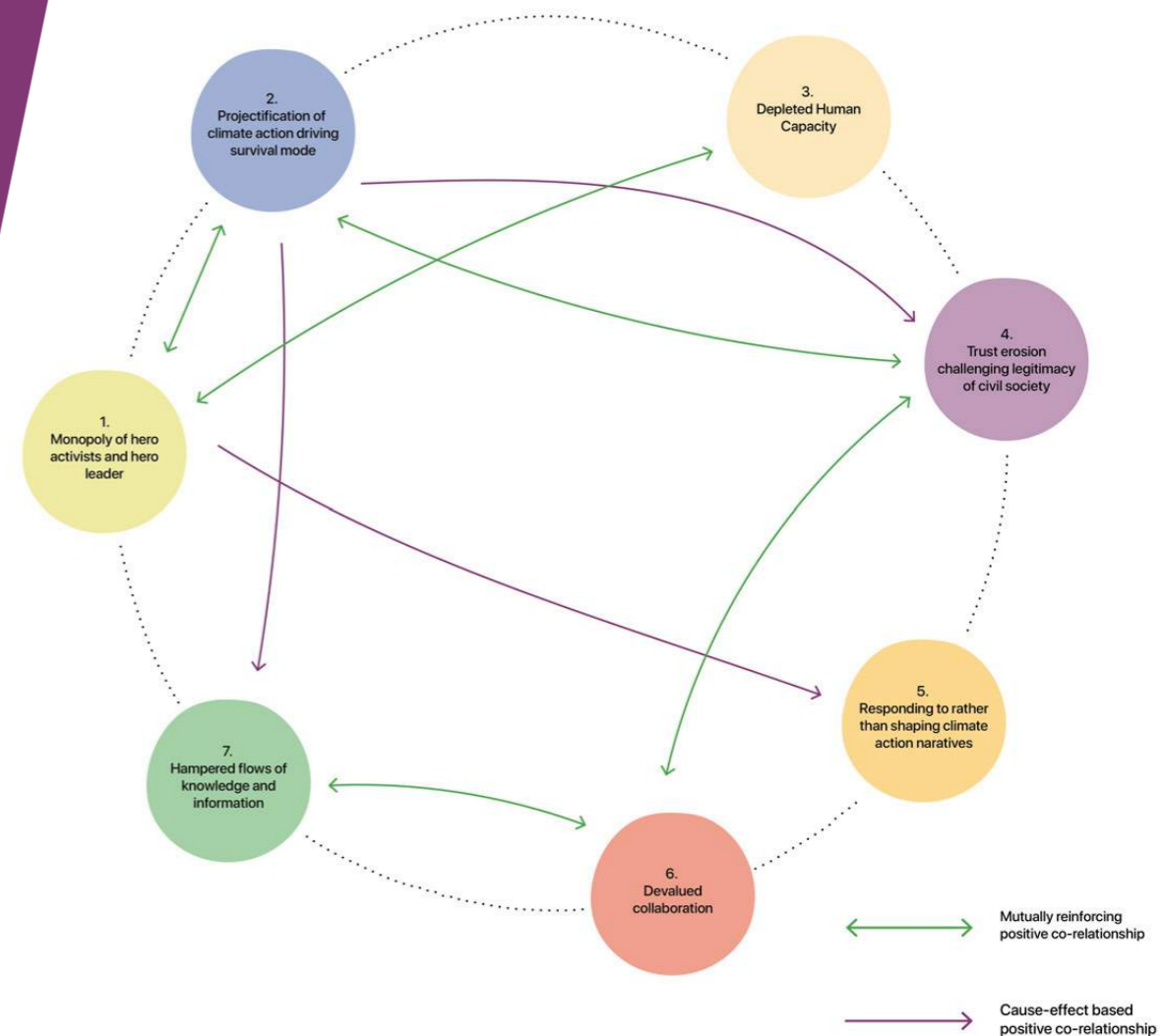
The seven dynamic areas we identified are:

- the monopoly of hero activists and hero leaders further concentrates power;
- the projectification of climate action is driving CSOs into survival mode;
- depleted human capacity in CSOs is eroding personal resilience;
- trust diminishing is challenging the legitimacy of civil society;
- a reactionary stance means CSOs are responding to, rather than shaping climate action narratives;
- collaboration is not valued nor incentivised which furthers unhealthy competition;
- hampered information and knowledge flows limit opportunities to drive collective impact.

RESOURCES TO GET YOU STARTED

We suggest you start this phase by reading the Diagnosis report while holding the following reflection questions:

- How does this dynamic show up in my work?
- Where else have I experienced this dynamic if I think about the climate action change system at large?
- How does this dynamic impact the goal of the climate action change system?
- What kinds of pressure are being created because of this dynamic within my organisation and my own ways of working? How is it impacting my organisational and individual resilience?
- How relevant are the identified exit strategies? Which other ones can I think of?



RESOURCES TO GET YOU STARTED

Diagnosis Report

Seven dynamic areas for a resilient civil society sector in India



[LINK](#)

Workshop 3

The future we want



[LINK](#)

Workshop 4

Leverage points



[LINK](#)

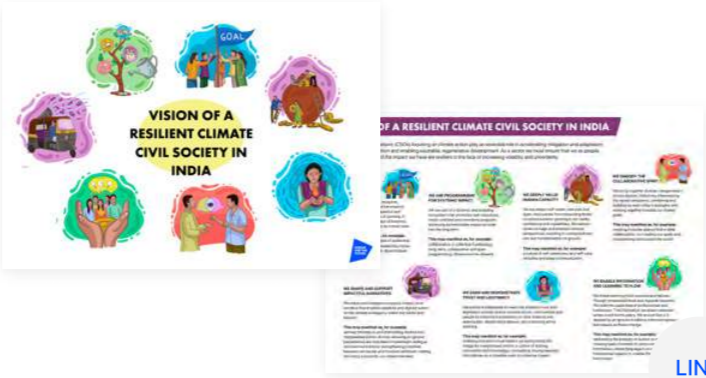
WORKSHOP 5

Ecosystem & organisational responses



[LINK](#)

Vision for a resilient civil society sector in India



[LINK](#)

Resilience Wheel tool



[LINK](#)

SO WHAT NEXT?

We are now at a point where we have a clear vision of resilience in the climate civil society sector here in India, and initial thoughts on steps we can take to build it together as an ecosystem of change agents. We know we want to continue to work together in this endeavour as it is critical to ensuring our impact is significant and long lasting.

We hope to find paths towards resilience through:

- Building diverse leadership
- Programming for systemic impact
- Deeply valuing and building human capacity
- Building trust and legitimacy
- Embodying the collaborative spirit
- Enabling information and learning to flow

If we are not resilient as a sector, we have little hope of achieving significant progress on tackling the climate emergency and building resilience in others.

This is by no means an exclusive community. If you wish to join us in acting to build our sector's resilience and amplify our impact please contact us by emailing Hansika Singh on h.singh@forumforthefuture.org

FEEDBACK

We would welcome your feedback on this resource pack. Please send Hansika an email with any questions you have on it and we'd love to hear:

1. How did you use these tools?
2. Do you have any feedback on this toolkit? How might we improve it?
3. What key insights have you arrived at? These may be about your organisation or the wider climate action space
4. Would you like to join our newsletter to hear more?