

Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals: Applying systems thinking and collaborative responses.



Developed by Collaboration for Impact (CFIs)
for the
Australian Council for International Development



AUSTRALIAN
COUNCIL
FOR
INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

Participant Workbook

This workbook is to be used while completing the Online Course for the Individual Learner

You can find these materials at
<https://acfid.asn.au/learning/sdgs>

Participant name:	
Participant organisation:	
Date course started:	
Date course completed:	

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Welcome

Welcome to **Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals applying systems thinking and collaborative responses.**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have the potential to be transformational if we embrace them in all their complexity. They are an agenda for change. Transformation, by definition, cannot be achieved through existing ways of working. New ways of working need to be explored, tested and adopted.

ACFID is focusing its work on the SDGs around four elements which we see as essential for transformational change.

- Thinking systemically
- Working collaboratively
- Reporting on impact, and
- Going beyond business as usual.

The purpose of this course is for **individuals to explore and test systems change and collaborative responses as a way of working differently.** ACFID believes that these approaches are essential to achieving the SDGs.

This course is delivered online in 10 modules. Content is largely video based supported by a Participant Workbook full of exercises and links to additional reading and resources. The course is self-directed and can be completed within a day or at your own pace. Time estimates associated with each module are provided to assist you in undertaking the course.

Module #	Purpose	Content	Estimated time
	Preparing for this course	Text	20 minutes reading
1	Welcome and purpose	Video	10 minutes watching + 3 minutes exercise
2	What is complexity?	Video + exercise	18 minutes watching + 12 minutes exercise
3	What is systems change?	Video	12 minutes watching + 5 minutes exercise
4	Learning how to diagnose systems	Video	10 minutes watching + 5 minutes exercise
5	Case Study: the Kakoda Trail	Video	18 minutes watching & taking notes
6	Application: Using the system assessment tool	Video + exercise	10 minutes watching + 50 minutes exercise
7	How do you design a collaborative response?	Video	20 minutes watching + 5 minutes exercise
8	How do you start a collaborative response?	Video	15 minutes watching + 15 minutes exercise

9	How to you build a common agenda?	Video	15 minutes watching + 5 minutes exercise
10	Reflections and next steps	Written + exercise	20 minutes

The need for this course was recognised by ACFID and its Development Practice Committee. ACFID partnered with Collaboration for Impact (CFI) <<http://www.collaborationforimpact.com/>> and CSIRO’s Enabling Adaptation Pathway Team <<https://research.csiro.au/eap/>> to develop the course. The partnership worked with Working Photos <<http://www.workingphotos.com.au/>> to develop the video resources. Kerry Graham from CFI created this online course.

At the end of the course you will be asked to provide written feedback to ACFID about whether the course achieved the learning objectives and your further learning needs. If you experience any difficulties during the course, please reach out to <learning@acfid.asn.au>.

Enjoy the learning!
ACFID Learning & Innovation Team

This Workbook

If you haven’t already done so please fill in the short 8 question Learner Registration [survey](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GJN868H) <<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GJN868H>>

This Participant Workbook has been designed to allow you to:

- Capture your key take-outs from the course content and optional additional readings
- Practice using some of the frameworks and tools shared
- Start thinking about how you or your organisation can start using systems thinking and collaborative responses to better contribute to achieving the SDGs.

Learning objectives for the course

The learning objectives of this course are outlined in the table below. Complete the table by marking on a scale of 1 – 10 how important each learning objective is for you, where 1 is not important at all and 10 is very important. Add any additional learning objectives you may have.

Learning Objective	Ranking between 1 - 10
Develop skills and confidence in dealing with complexity.	
Increase your Understanding of systems thinking and collaboration as approaches to achieve large-scale impact	

Increase your skills and confidence to apply systems thinking by practicing using systems assessment tools.	
Increase your skills and confidence to apply collaborative responses to achieve systems change through practical frameworks and tools to start, design and sustain a strategic and structured collaborative response.	
Other.....	

Pre-reading

After reading each of the articles, record your key take-outs below.

Towards a theory of systemic action (6 pages)

[https://static1.squarespace.com/static/594babd2b8a79b2463782825/t/595e6721e110eb62fe2e92df/1499359010727/18.+Towards a Theory Of Systemic Action REV02.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/594babd2b8a79b2463782825/t/595e6721e110eb62fe2e92df/1499359010727/18.+Towards+a+Theory+Of+Systemic+Action+REV02.pdf)

My top 3 key take-outs from this article are:
1.
2.
3.

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Collective Impact (6 pages)

https://ssir.org/images/articles/2011_WI_Feature_Kania.pdf

My top 3 key take-outs from this article are:
1.
2.
3.

Leadership in a permanent crisis (6 pages)

<https://hbr.org/2009/07/leadership-in-a-permanent-crisis>

My top 3 key take-outs from this article are:
1.
2.

3.

Module 1: Welcome and Purpose

Purpose:

To introduce you to the Sustainable Development Goals and why ACFID believes systems thinking and collaboration are needed to achieve the goals.

Estimated time

13 minutes

Instructions

Please watch the 10 minute video of Marc Purcell, ACFID CEO <link to You Tube Video> and complete the 3 minute exercise below.

Exercise

Why does ACFID think systems thinking and collaboration are needed to achieve the SDGs?:
1
Do you think there are any other reasons why systems thinking and collaboration are needed to achieve the SDGs?

Additional reading

- Systems thinking: unlocking the Sustainable Development Goals
<https://www.forumforthefuture.org/blog/systems-thinking-unlocking-sustainable-development-goals>

My top 3 key take-outs from the additional resources are:
1.

2.

3.

Module 2: What is complexity

Purpose:

To introduce you to complex challenges – what are they? How are they different from other problem types? And what is the most appropriate response?

Estimated time

30 minutes

Instructions

Please watch the 18 minute video of Kerry Graham, Collaboration for Impact Director <link to YouTube video> and complete the 12 minute exercise below.

Exercise

What is the difference between a complex problem and a complicated problem?		
List two complex challenges you or your organisation are grappling with. Briefly explain why you think they are complex and the type of response you/your organisation is currently bringing to address them.		
Complex challenges	Why they are complex?	Current type of response:
What key insights emerged for you about complexity?		

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Additional resources:

- David Snowden explaining Cynefin in more depth
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N7oz366X0-8>
- Stacey complexity framework explained in a 4 page handout (see PDF)

My top 3 key take-outs from the additional resources are:

1.

2.

3.

Module 3: What is systems change?

Purpose

To introduce you to systems change – what is it? How does systems change happen? What types of strategies or interventions change systems?

Estimated time

17 minutes

Instructions

Please watch the 12 minute video of Kerry Graham, Collaboration for Impact Director <link to YouTube video> and complete the 5 minute exercise in the Participant Handbook.

Exercise

In what ways is systems change different from creating social impact through program?
What key insights emerged for you about systems change?

Additional resources:

- Systems change: A guide to what it is and how to do it
<http://www.thinknpc.org/publications/systems-change/>
- Leverage points: places to intervene in a system
http://leadership-for-change.southernafricatrust.org/downloads/session_2_module_2/Leverage-Points-Places-to-Intervene-in-a-System.pdf
- Using systems thinking to create more impactful social policy
<http://ifsdigital.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/19-2-Article4-Canty-waldron.pdf>

My top 3 key take-outs from the additional resources are:
1.

2.
3.

Module 4: Learning how to diagnose systems

Purpose:

To introduce you to system thinking – how do you assess systems and determine where to intervene?

Estimated time

15 minutes

Instructions

Please watch the 10 minute video of Micahela Cosijn, CSIRO, <link to YouTube video> and complete the 5 minute exercise in the Participant Handbook.

Exercise

What are some of the change happening globally and locally that are impacting on the development work you or your organisation are involved with?

Additional reading

- Adaptive leadership (a short summary)
<http://www.apsc.gov.au/publications-and-media/current-publications/thinking-about-leadership-a-brief-history-of-leadership-thought/adaptive-leadership>
- Book: The practice of Adaptive leadership: Tool and Tactics for changing your organisation and the world
<https://hbr.org/product/practice-of-adaptive-leadership-tools-and-tactics-/an/5764-HBK-ENG>

My top 3 key take-outs from the additional resources are:
1.
2.

3.

Module 6: Application: Using the RAPTA system assessment tool

Purpose:

To provide you with instructions on how to use the RAPTA system assessment tool.

Estimated time

60 minutes

Instructions

Before watching the video, please read the instructions below for this module's exercise.

Please watch the 9 minute video of Micahela Cosijn, CSIRO <link to YouTube video> and complete the 50 minute exercise below.

Exercise

The exercise is to apply the system assessment tool to the Kakoda case study.

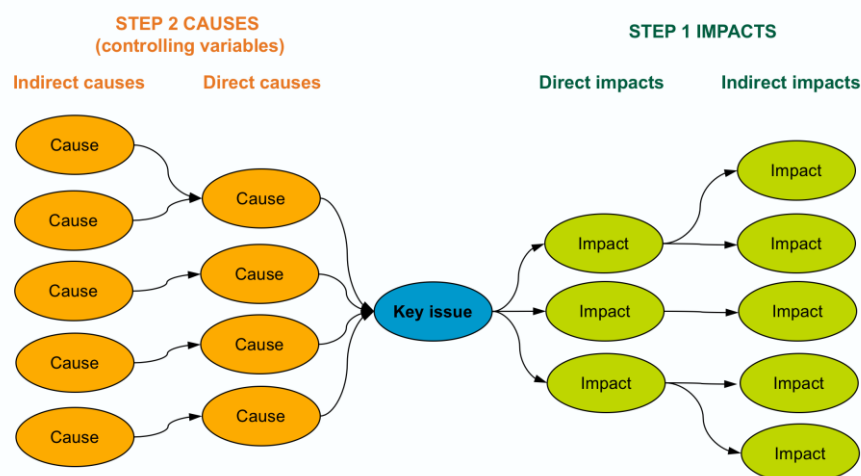
To do this exercise you will need:

- A large piece of paper, preferably A3 or A2.
- Two different coloured small post-it note pads
- A dark coloured texta

Instructions:

- Draw the system assessment tool template on a large piece of paper. Put an oval in the middle of the page for the key issue. At the top of the page, on the left of the key issue oval, write 'indirect causes' and 'direct causes' and on the right of the key issue oval write 'direct impacts' and 'indirect impacts'. Use the picture below as a guide

System assessment: causal loop analysis



- Write in the oval what you think is the key issue arising from the Kakoda case study.
- Using one colour of post-it notes for causes and another colour for impacts, start placing post-it notes on the paper. You will likely move between adding causes and impact. It might also happen that you write something as an impact and later change it to be a cause, and vice versa.
- Once you are comfortable with the causes and impacts you have generated, draw in arrows showing which indirect causes contribute to direct causes, and which direct impacts contribute to indirect impacts.
- Once you are comfortable with the linkages you have made, start looking for feedback loops. You are looking for relationships between impacts and causes – where a direct/indirect impact contributes to a direct/indirect cause. In the first instance, you are likely to identify feedback loops that are positive – meaning they amplify the cause or impact (make it worse). If you take more time you might find feedback loops that dampen the cause or impact (make it lesser).
- Lastly, once you are comfortable with the feedback loops you have identified and drawn, consider the intervention required and mark it with a star. If possible, prioritise the intervention points in order significance where 1 is most significant.
- And finally, take a photo of your completed system assessment tool and insert it in the Box below.

The picture of your completed system assessment tool of the Kakoda case study



Reflections:

My top 3 key take-outs from the using this system assessment tool:
1.
2.
3.

Module 7: How do you design collaborative responses?

Purpose:

To introduce you to frameworks for convening collaborative responses which create system change.

Estimated time

25 minutes

Instructions

Please watch the 20 minute video of Kerry Graham, Collaboration for Impact Director <link to YouTube video>, and complete the 5 minute exercise below.

Exercise

Does your current practice of collaboration reflect the elements of collective impact? If so how?		
Element:	Yes/No	If yes, how
Common aspiration, goals, and shared approach across diverse actors who have a stake in addressing the complex challenge		
Shared measurement system that tracks progress against goals and targets and is used as an input in facilitated learning		
Intentionally aligning leadership, resources and effort to the common agenda over time		
Using communication to share information, engage and mobilise stakeholders in action and support behaviour change		
A small neutral entity – backbone – that exists to improve the health and performance of the collaboration		
What key insights emerged for you from the collective impact approach to collaboration?		

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Additional reading

- Stanford Social Innovation Review – collection of 6 articles
https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact

My top 3 key take-outs from the additional resources are:
1.
2.
3.

Additional resources and tools

- Collaboration for Impact (Australian resources)
<http://www.collaborationforimpact.com/>
- Collective Impact Forum (US resources)
<https://collectiveimpactforum.org/>
- Tamarack Institute (Canadian resources)
<http://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/collectiveimpact>

Module 8: How do you start a collaborative response?

Purpose:

To share and explore the pre-conditions and mindset needed for collaborative responses.

Estimated time

30 minutes

Instructions

Please watch the 15 minute video of Kerry Graham, Collaboration for Impact Director <link to YouTube video> complete the 15 minute exercise in the Participant Handbook.

Exercise

Complete this brief Collective Impact Readiness Assessment tool <<https://collectiveimpactforum.org/readiness-assessment>> from the Collective Impact Forum.

Do you think the required mindset exists in you/your organisation/your collaborators to start a collaborative approach to tackle a complex challenge? If yes, why? If no, what action might need to be taken to intentionally strengthen and grow this required mindset?

What key insights emerged for you about what is required to start working collaboratively to address a complex problem?

Additional resources

- Tamarack Institute – getting started
<http://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/collectiveimpact>
- Collective Impact Forum – getting started

Participant Handbook

ACFID Online Course: Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals:
Applying systems thinking and collaborative responses.

<https://collectiveimpactforum.org/getting-started#getting-started>

My top 3 key take-outs from the additional resources are:

1.

2.

3.

2.
3.

Module 10: Reflection and next steps

Purpose:

For you to reflect on how systems thinking and collaborative responses can assist you and/or our organisation to better contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Estimated time

20 minutes

Exercise

Click on the [link](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GJ8Z9K7) <<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GJ8Z9K7>> to this Survey Monkey and complete the reflection and feedback questions

Thank you and next steps

Thank you for demonstrating your commitment to the SDGs and completing this course. We hope the content and exercise have stimulated and challenged you to apply systems thinking and collaborative approaches to your development work.

ACFID would like to support you and your organisation to continue to develop your understanding, skills and confidence to work in this way. Please keep an eye out for other relevant learning opportunities that ACFID provides at <https://acfid.asn.au/learning/learning-opportunities>.

You can also subscribe to Collaboration for Impact's database <insert link>for regular newsletters.

Contact us if you would like to comment or engage with us via Learning@acfid.asn.au

ACFID would like to thank the Development Practice Committee for recognising the need for this work within the ACFID membership and supporting the development of the resources.