

Peer Learning for Climate Action

Why it works and how funders can support it

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Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Supported by:



Federal Ministry
for the Environment, Nature Conservation
and Nuclear Safety

based on a decision of the German Bundestag

This overview brief is a product of the Support Project for the Implementation of the Paris Agreement (SPA), which is funded by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) under its International Climate Initiative (IKI) and is produced jointly by IISD and GIZ.

As a federally owned enterprise, GIZ supports the German Government in achieving its objectives in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development.

Published by:
Deutsche Gesellschaft für
Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

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Acknowledgements:
The author would like to thank all those who have shared their wisdom, experience, and passion for peer learning to inform this brief. Thanks go out to Michelle Du Toit and Blaise Dobson at SouthSouthNorth, Anika Terton and Christian Ledwell at the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) Global Network, and Blane Harvey at McGill University. Additional thanks to Carl Jackson, Cheryl Brown, Erica Packington, Lucia Scodanibbio Jacqui Namm, and Martin Rokitzki. Errors and omissions are the author's own.

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The opinions put forward in this publication are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety

Design/layout:
SCHUMACHER Brand+Interaction Design GmbH, Darmstadt

Berlin, April 2022



Peer Learning for Climate Action: Why it works and how funders can support it

Catherine Fisher

This brief showcases peer learning as an effective approach to developing capacity for responding to the challenges of climate change. It is aimed at practitioners in funding and implementing agencies, particularly those working in policy processes at national levels, but it is relevant for all those interested in strengthening capacity for climate action.

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Introduction

“Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day,” the ancient saying goes, “teach a man to fish and he will eat for a lifetime.” But what happens if that person is faced with declining fish stocks and the catastrophic changes wreaked upon our planet and livelihoods? The wicked challenges posed by climate change call for a fundamentally different approach to working with people, organizations, and societies to learn and respond adequately. Peer learning is a key part of that approach. “Build on the knowledge and experience of fisherfolk,” a new, more timely saying might go, “support them to learn together—and from others—to generate strategies for a changing world.”

Peer learning has proven to be an effective approach for responding to the challenges of climate change thanks to its emphasis on emerging knowledge, contextualized experience, and potential to make the leap from learning to action. It thus provides a much-needed alternative to typical models of capacity development that are widely understood to have failed to generate sustainable and satisfactory results.¹ It offers the promise of a more sustainable, effective, and demand-driven approach to capacity development for climate action.

This brief defines peer learning as: *a reciprocal learning activity based on mutual respect and equality in which participants share knowledge, ideas, and experience to strengthen the capability of each participant to respond to real-world challenges that they have in common.*²

Key Messages

This brief will demonstrate that:

▶ **Peer learning is an effective approach to capacity development:**

Whether used independently or alongside other inputs (e.g., technical assistance), peer learning, through its grounding in equality, experience, and ownership, can increase the effectiveness of climate measures and generate sustained outcomes beyond the lifetime of projects and programs.

▶ **Peer learning is particularly relevant in the context of climate change:**

It supports people in responding to new challenges, enables the diffusion of ideas and experience when the pace of change outstrips formal processes of knowledge generation and learning, and strengthens the relationships, functional skills, and capabilities needed to tackle the complexities of climate change.

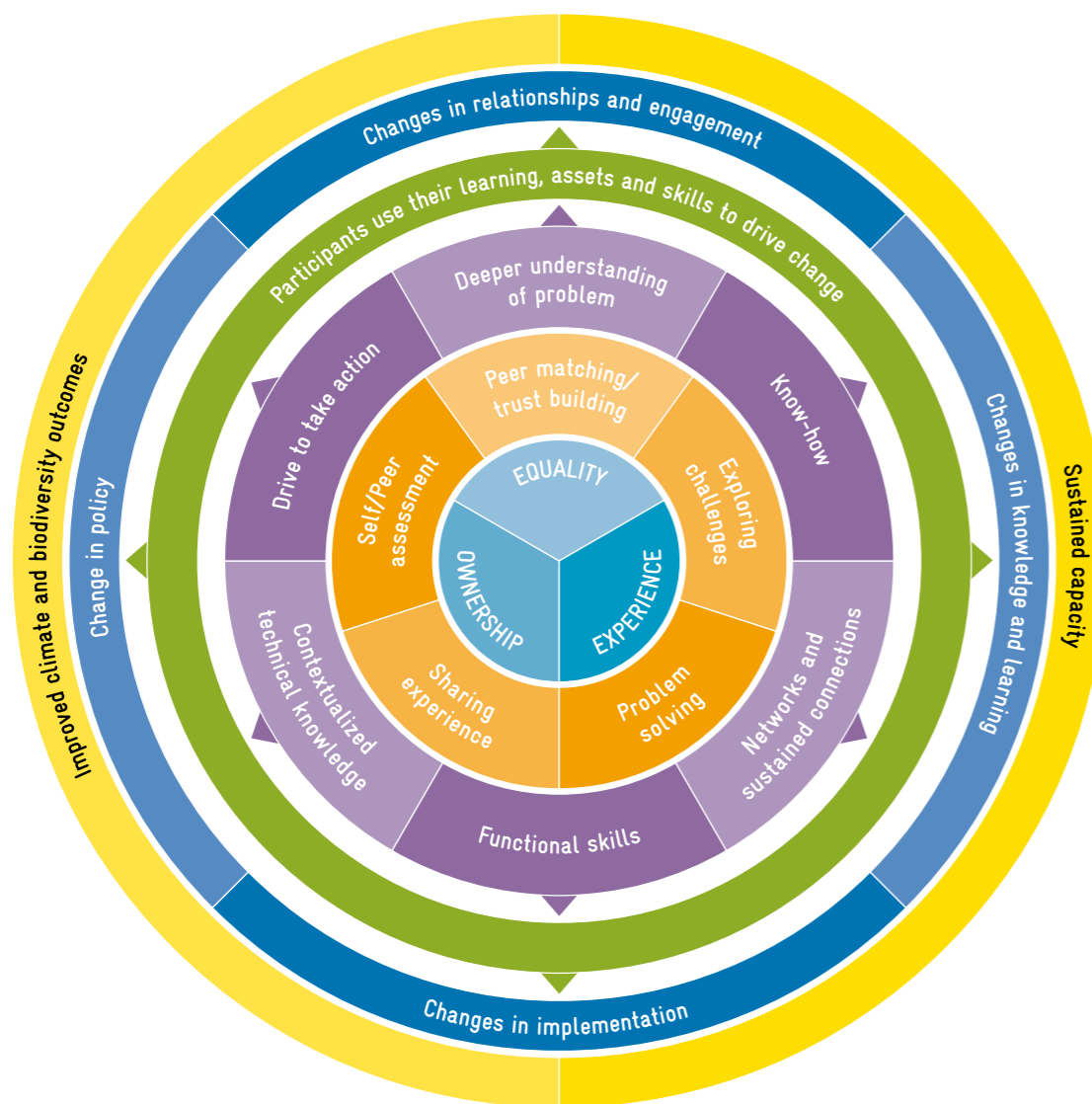
¹ This was the finding of a recent review of approaches to capacity building in Rokitzki and Hofemeier (2020).

² Definition adapted from Boud (2001), supplemented with concepts from Andrews and Manning (2015) and Du Toit and Carter (2020).

▶ **The way in which peer learning is funded and implemented will shape its effectiveness:**

Although a cost-effective form of capacity development, peer learning requires investments in design and the implementation of learning processes, sometimes over long time frames, and flexibility to respond to the interests and needs of participants to enable genuine ownership.

This brief is based on reviews of the literature, consultations with practitioners, and the considerable body of work undertaken by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Effective Institutions Platform. It draws specifically on two examples of peer learning in the context of supporting climate action: the NAP Global Network implemented by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) and the Southern African Climate Finance Partnership, implemented by SouthSouthNorth that are featured in Appendix 3.



The peer learning wheel used throughout this brief [Figure 1. Peer Learning Wheel] illustrates the potential for activities, based on the core principles of peer learning, to generate learning, assets, and skills that can in turn be applied to generate impact and sustainable change.

What Is Peer Learning?

1.

The core principles of peer learning are:

Equality: It is based on learning from and with peers rather than one-way instruction. Peer learning does not assume that one person has knowledge while others do not. Although in some cases a peer may have more experience in a particular area than others, it respects and values divergent experiences and perspectives. Producers of learning are also consumers. It relies on trust and respect between participants.

Experience: It is focused on learning from practical experience.

One of the special characteristics of peer learning is its ability to mobilize practical, contextualized, tacit knowledge about real-world challenges in which learners are directly engaged. It is usually based on a cycle of do/reflect/learn/apply.⁴ The on-the-job nature of peer learning means that learning is more likely to be practical and applied.

Ownership: Learners own their learning and how they apply it.

Learners determine what they want to learn, they learn actively from enquiry rather than passively from instruction, and it is up to them to interpret and apply what they learn from peers. Ownership of learning processes means learning is more likely to be relevant to learners, is more likely to be applied, and is an alternative to discredited “one-size-fits-all” approaches to capacity development.



The premise behind peer learning is that no one knows the challenges facing development practitioners better than the practitioners themselves. Each practitioner is privy to a wealth of knowledge and experience, but their experiences are rarely transferred to others. By passing this expertise on to practitioners in other countries and ensuring it is shared within one's own country, practitioners can build on past experiences.

Effective Institutions Platform³



³ See, for example, the Effective Institutions Platform (EIP) <https://www.effectiveinstitutions.org/en/our-approach/2>

⁴ The use of Kolb's theory in promoting learning in large climate-focussed programs and portfolios is explored in Harvey et al. (2017).

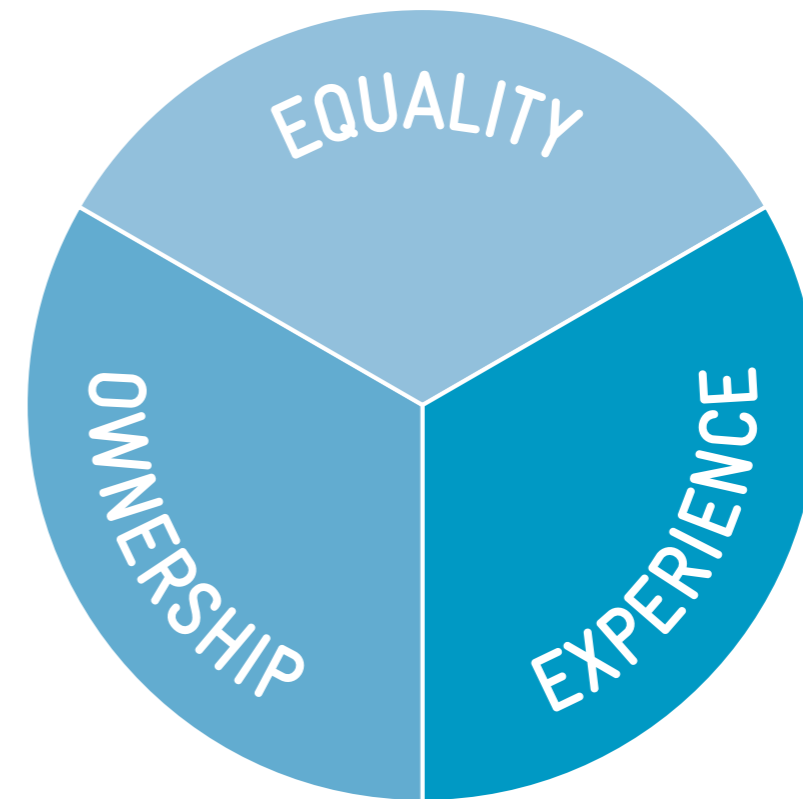


Figure 2. Core principles of peer learning

Box 1. Related ideas

There are many terms used to describe peer learning, some of which are synonymous (e.g., peer-to-peer learning, practitioner learning, or horizontal learning), some of which reflect the different contexts from which they emerged (e.g., networked or cohort learning).

Related approaches to peer learning include knowledge sharing and social learning or co-construction. Although the boundaries between them are blurred, the approaches differ in emphasis and are often used in combination. While peer learning emphasizes an exchange about shared challenges that learners apply in their respective contexts, knowledge sharing emphasizes identification and documentation of good practice so it can be transferred from one location to another; social learning or co-construction emphasizes applying multiple perspectives to a specific challenge as it appears in a particular location.

See Appendix 1 for further exploration of related concepts.

What Activities Does Peer Learning Involve?

Peer learning is based on processes of doing, reflecting, and learning with peers. Typically, it involves a range of inter-related activities that can be grouped as:

- a) peer matching/trust building; b) exploring challenges; c) problem solving; d) sharing experience; e) self/peer assessment.

The need to build trust and engage deeply requires an intensity of engagement; some interactions are “quick and thick” intense interactions over a short period of time, others last months or even years. Peer learning processes usually use multiple tools, such as large group meetings, peer-produced knowledge products, and study tours. Organizers often combine structured learning activities, such as workshops, with informal engagement and exchange, such as discussions over meals that serve to develop relationships.

This guide will not go into detail about how to design peer learning processes: for further explanation of the range of tools, approaches, and instruments that can be used, see the resources listed in Appendix 1.

Box 2. Can peer learning happen virtually?

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, thinking and practice on this question are changing rapidly. Currently, there is some consensus that:

- ▶ Peer learning *can* happen virtually if trust, relationships, purpose, and ways of working have been established beforehand through face-to-face interaction, but only with considerable investment in process design and scaled-back ambition in terms of content and depth of engagement.
- ▶ Online peer-learning processes can struggle to attract and sustain commitment due to technical barriers, lower familiarity with or value placed on online interaction, and difficulties in protecting time to participate from other commitments.
- ▶ Related processes can, however, be moved online successfully. Webinars, for example, are a good format for knowledge sharing but rarely enable collective, peer learning.
- ▶ This is a rapidly developing area; a shift in practice by facilitators and learners alike is required for virtual peer learning to realize its full potential.

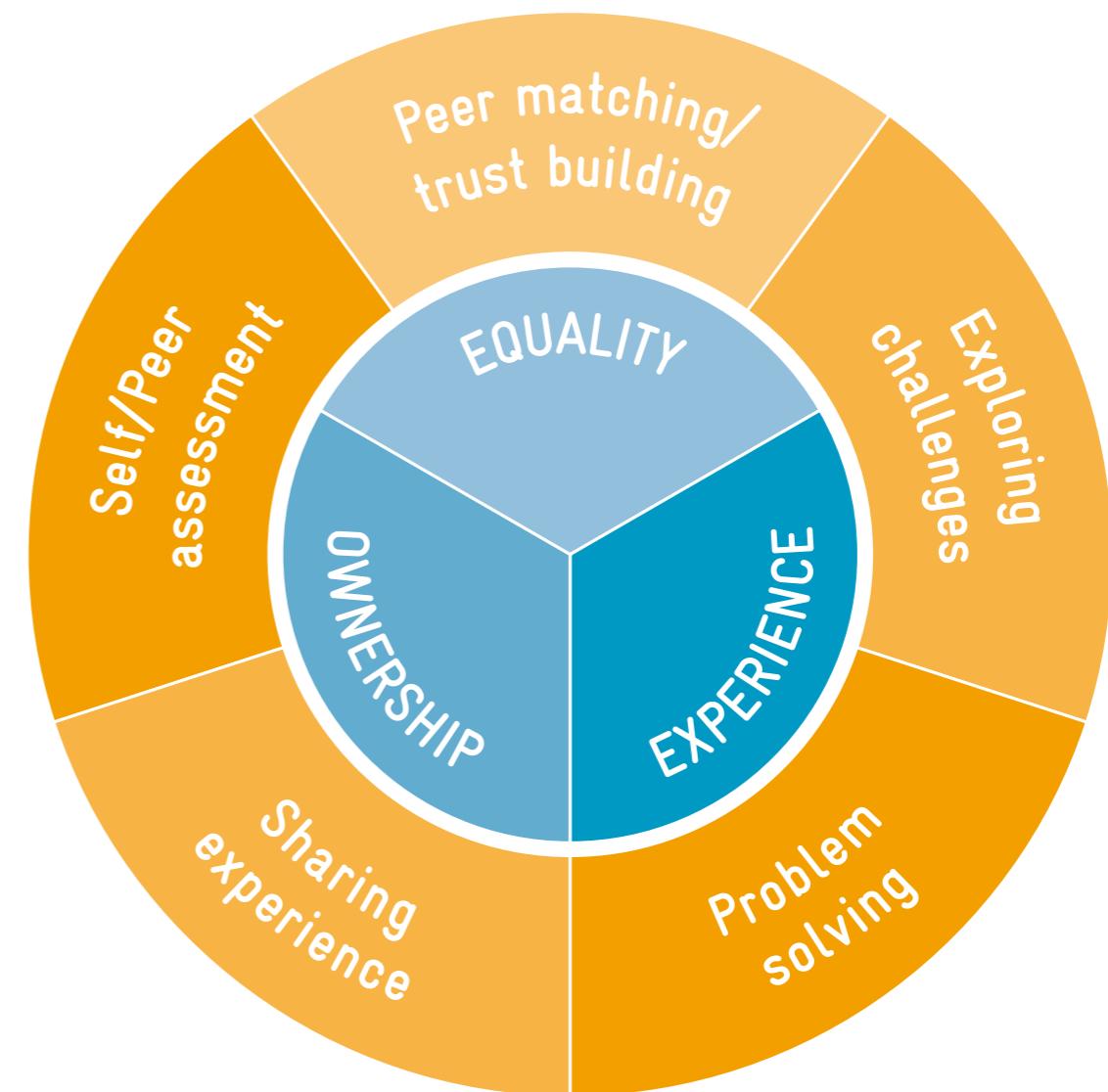


Figure 3. Peer-learning activities build on core principles

Who Constitutes a Peer?

2.

Within the approach of peer learning, peers are individuals, organizations, or countries that face common problems and challenges, have common goals and tasks to fulfill, and have mutually relevant experience and insights to share.⁵ In the context of climate action, there are two important characteristics to take into account when considering potential peers.

The Importance of South–South Learning

In the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, the concept of a peer is often associated with models of South–South cooperation that emphasize learning between low- and middle-income countries. This contrasts with approaches in which knowledge, models, and technologies are understood to flow exclusively from North to South. Peer learning embodies a simple yet radical challenge to neocolonial ideas about whose knowledge matters. South–South learning is important because Northern solutions can often appear abstract in Southern contexts; practitioners from the developing world “speak the same language” and can share solutions that are potentially more context responsive (Task Team on South–South Cooperation, 2010 and Effective Institutions Platform, 2021c).⁶



South–South cooperation will be vital to ensure mutual support and exchange of best practices to enhance adaptation.

United Nations Secretary-General
António Guterres 2019



⁵ These factors were identified as most important in a survey of peer learners by Andrews and Manning (2015) and in the review of learning in the Future Climate Africa program (Araujo et al., 2020).

⁶ Peer learning also takes place in North–South, triangular models (involving international organizations or traditional donor countries), and multistakeholder engagements, with the lines between them increasingly blurred and subject to challenge. The evolving nature of these relationships is explored in OECD (n.d.).

Climate Change Has Generated New Potential Peers

The rapid, disruptive, and society-wide changes precipitated by climate change mean that many people who are established in their professional sphere, whether in finance, planning, health, or the fishing sector, need to react to new challenges, deliver on new portfolios, work within new regulations, or engage with new concepts for which they have not been trained, that do not come with a manual, and often include institutional barriers. Peer learning assumes that participants have knowledge and experience but may benefit from additional ideas, tactics, tools, confidence, or motivation to respond to upcoming challenges. Importantly, it requires that participants are willing to accept that this might be provided by peers.

» *There is no global consensus on the subject, we are doing trial and error, we are learning from our mistakes and learning from each other.*

Benedict Libanda, Chief Executive Officer, Environmental Investment Fund of Namibia Participant in the Southern African Climate Finance Partnership⁷



⁷ Featured in SouthSouthNorth (2020).

How Does Peer Learning
Complement Typical Approaches
to Capacity Development?

3.

Capacity development is widely acknowledged as a key means of realizing sustainable development. Almost as widely acknowledged are the limitations of typical approaches to capacity development for climate change action, which, like wider development assistance efforts, are overwhelmingly dominated by technical assistance and training (Du Toit & Carter, 2020). These approaches are estimated to make up about one-quarter to one-half of global aid, despite being criticized as “supply-driven, expensive, poorly planned and integrated, and failing to promote country ownership” (Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, 2009).

Consensus is building around the need for alternative models for capacity development that are a) nationally owned; b) sensitive of existing capacities, knowledge, and experience; c) based on analyses of wider context and power-dynamics; d) embedded within broader and long-term change processes; e) look beyond technical skills to a wider set of capabilities (Du Toit & Carter, 2020; Khan et al., 2019; Pearson, 2011; Rokitzki & Hofemeier, 2020).

Much like addressing climate change, what needs to be done to improve approaches to capacity development is known – the problem seems to lie in actually doing it. Adopting peer learning is one approach to improving capacity development practice, as it does not feature the most critiqued features of typical approaches. This approach is illustrated in Table 1, which compares stylized capacity-development approaches (acknowledging that not all capacity-development approaches fit this model) with peer learning.

Table 1. Comparison of typical capacity-building and peer learning approaches

	“Typical” capacity building	Peer learning
Starting point	Deficiency and gap filling	Strengthening what exists
Focus on	What should be ...	What is working ... What might work in different contexts
Whose knowledge	External “international” experts’, often from the global North	Peers’, complemented by knowledge from other sources where appropriate
Type of knowledge	Often formal, heavily mediated, or distant from its source	Emergent, experiential, tacit, contextual
Purpose	To deliver on specific tasks or meet standards	To identify and address challenges that participants are experiencing
Content	Determined in advance	Responsive to questions and interest
Results	Technical knowledge and skills	Cognitive, relational, functional, and motivational

Source: Table content inspired by and adapted from Government of Bangladesh & World Bank, 2008.

In spite of its great potential and many strengths, peer learning is not a silver bullet, and its use alone will not address all the fundamental critiques of capacity development. Like other forms of capacity development, it is most likely to be effective if it is both a) based on an understanding of the context in which participants are located (organizations, sectors, systems, institutions), considering the barriers to and opportunities for change that go beyond the individual’s skills and knowledge, and b) embedded within broader change processes.



Some argue that such donor-driven technical assistance, led by visiting foreign experts, even harms local capacities, as it weakens local ownership and deprives local recipients of taking responsibility for the projects and their outcomes.

Khan et al. (2019)



Consequently, peer learning is often used alongside other strategies for supporting desired change. Interventions to which peer learning can add value include financing projects and programs; establishing and rolling out new approaches or technologies and supporting innovation processes; institutional and policy reform initiatives; network and alliance development; leadership and organizational development; and sector strengthening and field building.

The examples of the NAP Global Network and Southern African Climate Finance Partnership (see Appendix 3) illustrate how peer learning can be combined with other capacity-development approaches. In both cases, peer learning strengthened targeted technical assistance by ensuring it was demand driven and by helping to develop and broker connections between recipients and providers. Both examples illustrate how it is closely associated with processes of knowledge generation and sharing, whether linking global and local knowledge, informing research agendas, or producing knowledge outputs.

Box 3. Developing a value chain of support activities can accelerate knowledge-to-action

The NAP Global Network developed three main categories of support for partner countries – technical assistance, peer learning, and exchange, as well as knowledge resources and communications – which ended up building onto each other. Developed knowledge products became important resources for peer-learning events, which, in turn, prompted countries to identify technical support needs. Offering a mutually reinforcing package of support activities allowed countries to turn their learning into action without losing momentum, which is critical in NAP processes (NAP Global Network, 2021). See Appendix 3.

This section will explore how peer learning can contribute to change and how it is particularly relevant for climate action.

First, it explores the **direct results** of peer learning activities before considering how they enable participants to put their learning and assets into action as well as the kind of impacts to which peer learning can contribute.

Direct Results of Peer-Learning Processes

Feedback from participants and facilitators suggests that the direct results of peer learning include enhanced knowledge and a range of less tangible yet extremely valuable assets.

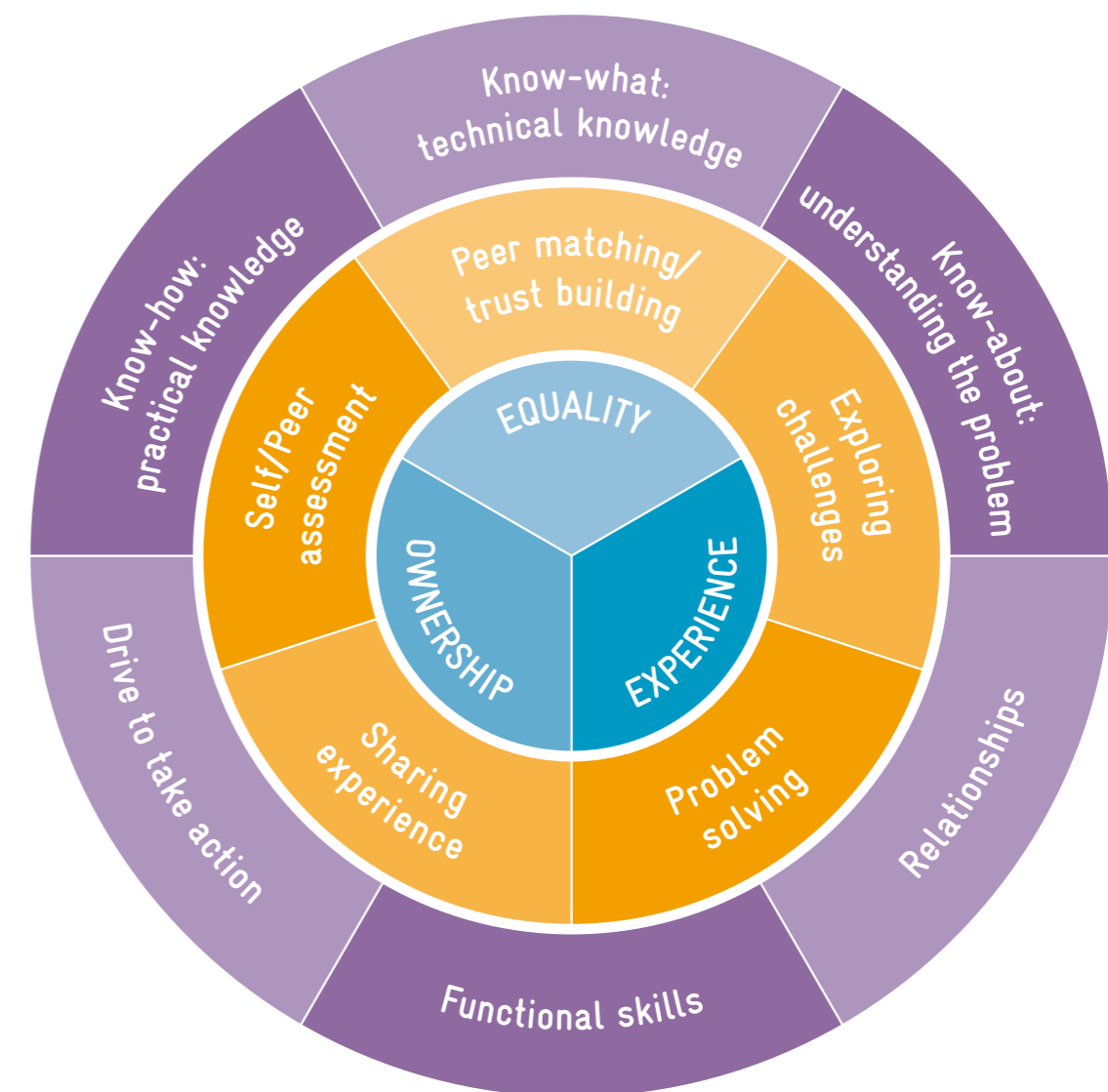


Figure 4. Direct results of peer-learning activities

Why Support Peer Learning?
What results and impacts
can it generate?

4.



Understanding what to do about policy reform is the (relatively) easy part, our clients tell us. The hard part is figuring out how to do it. The path to reform is fraught with the details of practical implementation, the challenges of working with stakeholders, and the mammoth task of ensuring that a reform is both effective and politically sustainable. That's why the best sources of wisdom on how to do it are the reformers themselves – who have been there and done that.

Brook & Fidas (2010)



Know-How: Understanding how to put technical knowledge into action

Understanding not just *what* needs to be done but *how* to do it is possibly the most often cited benefit of peer learning. Sharing “tacit knowledge” (the kind of experiential knowledge that is not generally documented) directly between peers in an unmediated way is important for understanding the practicalities of implementation. For example, it can support the integration of political thinking into implementation (Andrews & Manning, 2015). The focus

on application and implementation can help overcome the well-documented failure of training to generate change (Pearson, 2011).

Know-What: Contextualized technical knowledge

Acquisition of technical knowledge is a key result of peer-learning processes that can diffuse new ideas rapidly, broadly, and across sectoral and disciplinary divides. It is particularly valued by people distanced from sources of the latest evidence and ideas.⁸ Discussion with peers helps participants to make sense of and contextualize technical knowledge, highlighting that there is rarely one “right” course of action (i.e., that technical solutions need to be adapted to socio-economic and physical contexts).

Know-About: Deeper understanding of problems and challenges

One criticism of supply-driven approaches to capacity development is that they provide solutions with little understanding of the problem. Peer learning can help participants explore the problems and challenges as they appear in their context, for example, through processes of self or peer assessment.⁹ Deeper understanding of problems enables demand-driven capacity development.

Functional Skills

Engaging in peer-learning processes requires participants to develop and use “soft” functional and interpersonal skills for working with others, learning collectively, and identifying and solving problems. Peer-learning processes may introduce participants to convening and engagement approaches that they can adopt in their work.

⁸ The evaluation of the Future Climate for Africa program (Araujo et al., 2020) found that most learning effects fall under the categories of cognitive (40.3%) and relational (35.5%) outcomes.

⁹ This emerged as a key theme in the learning event “Learning through Interconnected Systems” (Effective Institutions Platform, 2021b).

Relationships

Relationships developed through peer learning often extend and sustain beyond peer learning activities. They can act as informal knowledge or mutual support networks as participants put plans into action: knowing people to whom you can reach out directly to ask for advice can be invaluable. Relationships and networks formed during peer learning can develop into mechanisms for more formal cooperation or collaboration such as joint projects, technology transfer agreements, or adoption of common standards (Task Team on South–South Cooperation, 2010).

Drive to Take Action: Incentives, motivation, and agency

Feedback from participants in peer-learning processes often describes how learning with others has “inspired” and “motivated” them to take action, in some cases boosting confidence and even empowering participants and increasing their agency (see Figure 5). Often this stems from the realization that others are experiencing or have overcome similar challenges.

How do you feel at the end of this Learning Journey?

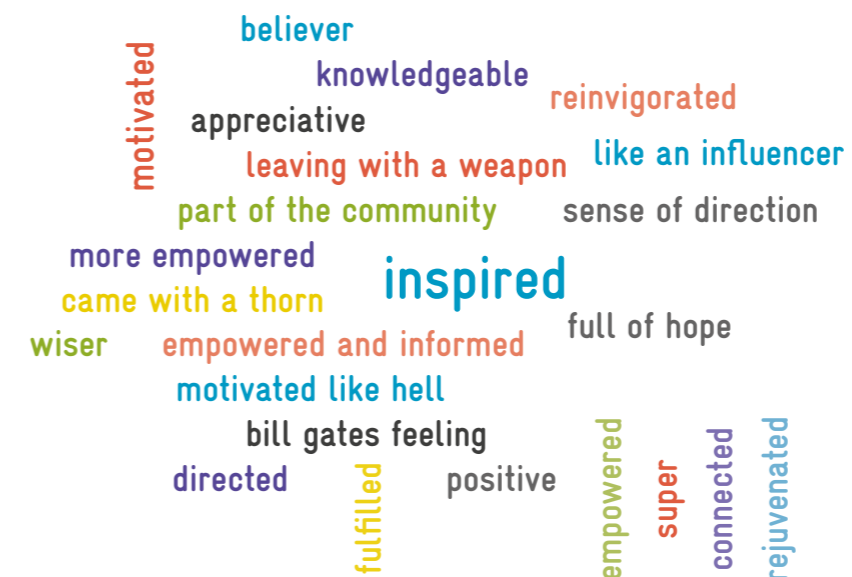


Figure 5. Participants in the Southern African Climate Finance Partnership share how they feel after a peer learning process (modified from: Southern African Climate Finance Partnership [SACFP], 2020)

Putting Learning and Assets Into Action

Peer learning will only bring about change if participants put the learning and assets gained from the process into action in the organizations, sectors, and systems in which they work. By enabling learners to set the agenda around what is learned and going beyond a narrow focus on acquisition of technical skills and knowledge, peer learning can support the process of implementation by equipping participants to:

- ▶ **Generate contextualized strategies aligned with national priorities**, so increasing the likelihood that strategies will be positively received by other stakeholders and enhancing opportunities for implementation.
- ▶ **Feel ownership** over emerging ideas, increasing the likelihood they will champion or advocate for those ideas and generate buy in from others.
- ▶ **Combine cognitive, motivational, relational, and functional assets to drive implementation processes**, drawing on practical know-how, convening skills, supportive relationships, and an enhanced sense of agency and confidence.

This combination of cognitive, motivational, relational, and functional assets is particularly relevant to climate change action, which requires effectively consulting and engaging multiple stakeholder groups, working across boundaries (whether between sectors, organizations, or ministries), navigating competing agendas, and mobilizing resources. Implementation requires significant personal determination, a factor often overlooked in consideration of capacity.

» *Experiences from other contexts inspire action, help avoid pitfalls and overcome barriers, paying forward the hard-won lessons from early-movers ... and accelerating adaptation action. We've seen this dynamic play out time and again through our peer learning events. Counterparts sharing stories of success and challenge have given rise to new ideas, problem solving, and overall motivation to engage in adaptation planning.*

NAP Global Network (2018)

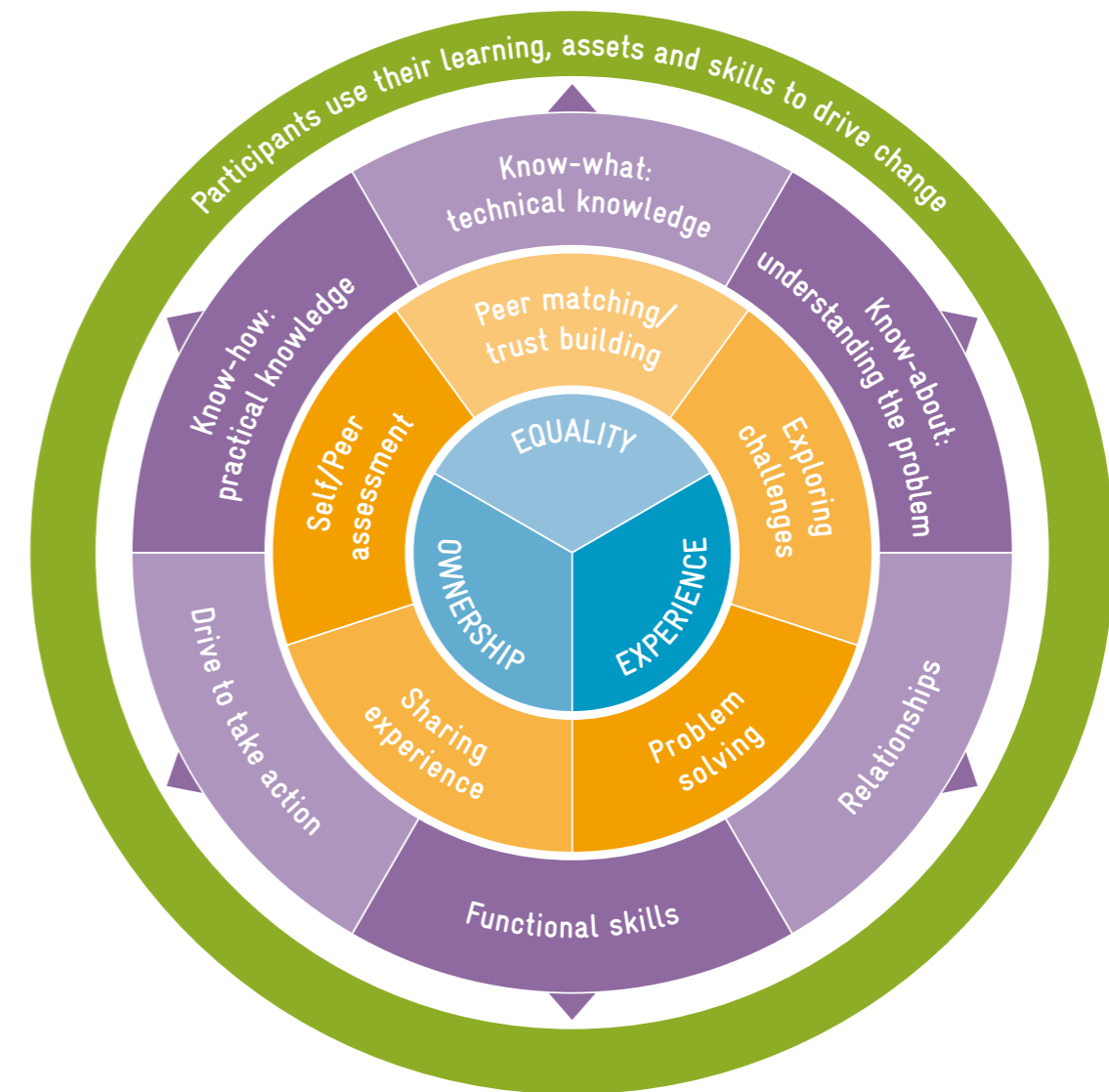


Figure 6. Participants can use learning, assets and skills acquired through peer-learning activities to drive change

» *We were able to hit the nail on the head. Our policies were able to sail through management and were approved in a short space of time. ... There is now understanding of climate change issues in the bank and strategic change was taken.*

Chrispen Maseva, Chief Environmental Expert, Infrastructure Development Bank of Zimbabwe, Participant in the Southern African Climate Finance Partnership¹⁰

Impacts of Peer Learning

When participants in peer-learning processes put learning and assets into action, it can contribute to impact in policy, implementation, knowledge, evidence, networks, and collaboration. Impact will rarely be achieved through peer learning alone: it adds value to processes and approaches such as investment in technologies, institution building, or research.

Changes in Policy: Adoption of a policy, strategy, or planning document

Peer learning can contribute at multiple points to policy-formulation processes: problem identification, designing workable and contextualized solutions, and generating buy in for change. Peer learning can inform demand-driven requests for additional support such as technical assistance or financial resources that can help accelerate change. For example, participation in a NAP Global Network peer-learning event contributed to the creation of the Vietnamese NAP Private Sector Engagement Strategy, which was also supported through demand-driven technical assistance.

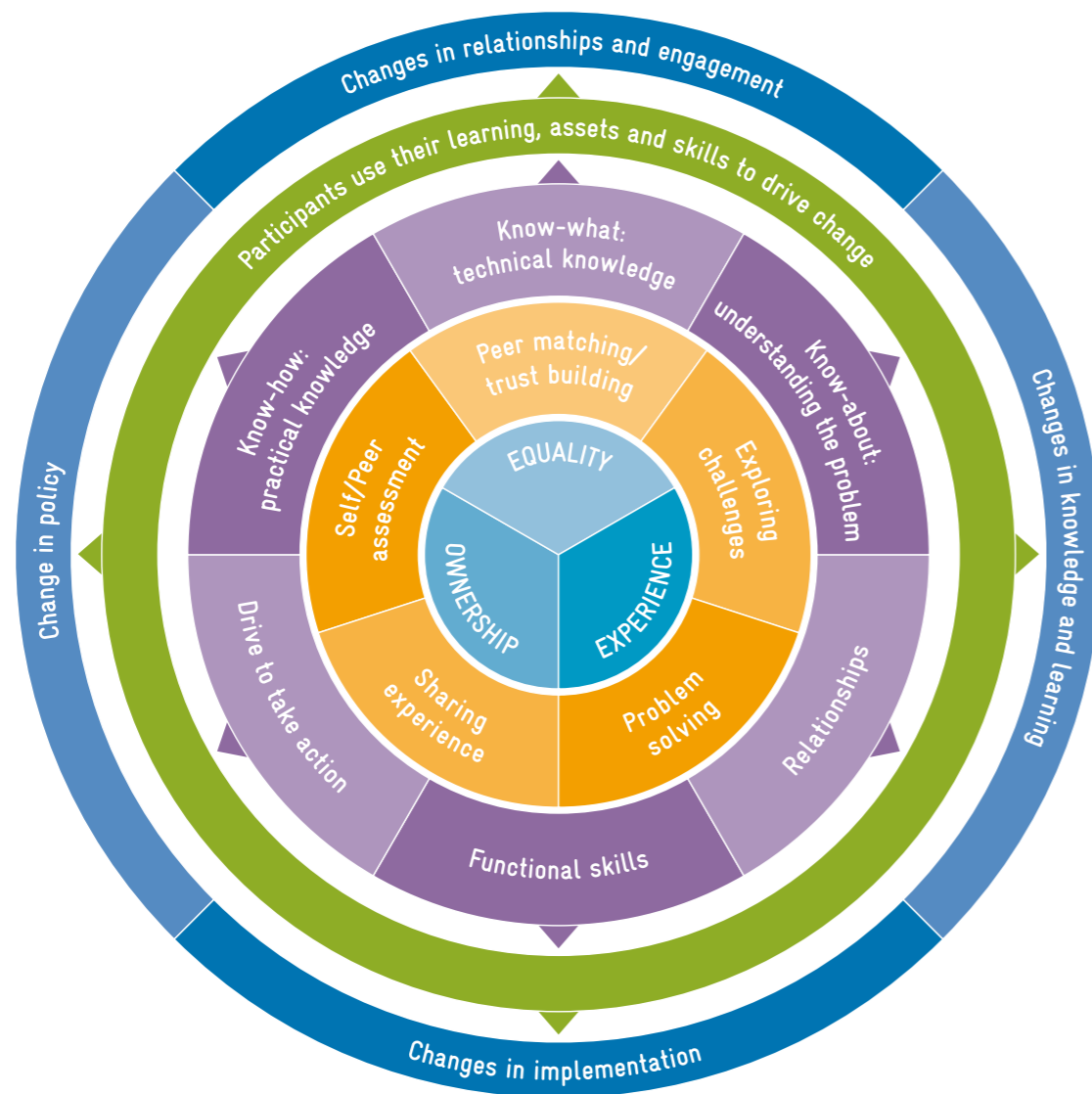


Figure 7. Impacts of peer learning

Changes in Implementation: Adoption of new approaches and changes to what is done and how Peer learning enables changes in implementation through its focus on practical know-how and real-world examples that can inspire learners to make direct changes within their sphere of influence, supported by strengthened functional skills. In both examples in Appendix 3, peer learning inspired the creation of new structures to enable implementation of climate-related tasks, for example, participation in the SACFP prompted the Infrastructure Development Bank of Zimbabwe to create a dedicated Climate Finance and Sustainability Unit.

Changes in Knowledge and Evidence: Ongoing processes for learning, knowledge generation, and uptake

Peer learning can expand the evidence base for climate action by generating a “virtuous spiral” in which new approaches are applied, experiences reviewed and adapted, and resulting knowledge shared with others. Peer learning can also strengthen the ability to learn, which is recognized as both a capability in its own right and an essential, underpinning capability for other aspects of sustainable capacity development,¹¹ including adaptive capacity. For example, lessons from Vietnam’s experience in creating their Private Sector Engagement strategy (see example above) informed the creation of a United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change toolkit, which was subsequently applied in Kenya.

Changes in Networks and Collaboration: Working together in new ways

Peer learning has inspired the adoption of more inclusive practices to problem solving, prioritization, and policy formulation. For example, the creation of the Madagascan multistakeholder NAP coordinating committee was inspired by the experience that Vanuatu shared at a NAP Global Network peer-learning event. Peer learning can also contribute to the creation of ongoing networks, collaborative relationships, or strategic alliances to demand and bring about change.

Long-Term Goals of Peer-Learning Processes

Should some or all of these changes be realized, they may in turn and in time contribute to the higher-level and long-term goals of:

Improved climate and biodiversity outcomes resulting from revised practices and approaches, better implementation of climate change programs, revised policies, and effective reforms.

Sustained capacity to respond to climate change and protect biodiversity through strengthened functional capabilities, improved processes, and strengthened institutions that can be applied to addressing other challenges and achieving more outcomes.

These outcomes comprise the outer ring of the learning wheel: peer-learning activities’ contribution to them will be diffuse and difficult to identify. Yet they should be considered the long-term goals of any capacity-development intervention for climate action.

11 See Pearson (2011).

The Complete Peer-Learning Wheel

The peer-learning wheel illustrates how activities based on the core principles of peer learning can generate learning assets and skills that can in turn be applied to generate impact and sustainable change.

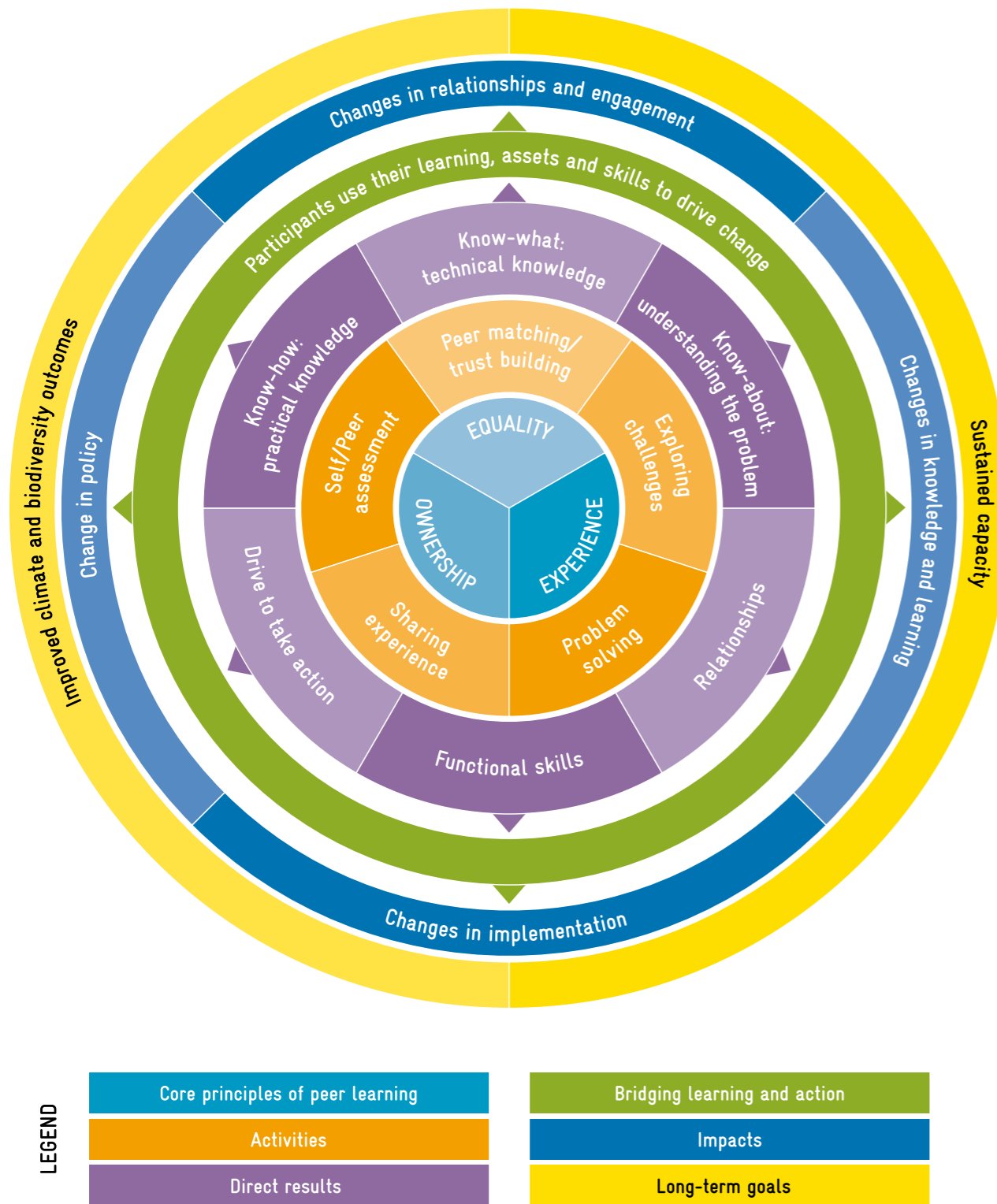


Figure 8. Peer Learning Wheel

How Can Funders Support Effective Peer Learning?

5.

Discussion with facilitators of peer learning reveals that the ways in which peer learning approaches are funded can sometimes create barriers for effective process design. It is important for funders who wish to support peer learning to do so in a way that maximizes its potential contribution to climate action.

Six recommendations for effectively funding peer learning:

- ▶ **1. Include scoping or inception phases to ensure peer learning is demand driven and owned by participants:** The best peer-learning processes are based on solid foundations, in particular good understanding of the interests of potential participants generated through participatory needs assessment, problem identification, and the careful identification of “peers.” This can take time but is an integral part of peer-learning processes.
- ▶ **2. Invest in process design (and process-design capacity):** Effective peer learning relies on careful design of processes and tools that are suitable for the goals of the participants. This may require specialist facilitators, ideally working with project stakeholders to develop process facilitation capacity within implementing programs and countries.
- ▶ **3. Value and enable trust and relationship building:** Effective peer learning is based on trust and relationship building, neither of which develops instantly. Experience suggests that time and participation in shared experiences (e.g., field visits) and social events are important for building trust and relationships. More familiar capacity-development approaches such as training or expert speakers can be used early in peer-learning processes to attract participants who are not familiar with these approaches to begin the process of trust building.¹²
- ▶ **4. Allow for iteration and flexibility in the themes and the mechanisms used:** Recent discussion has observed that approaches that are problem driven, agile/flexible, and adaptive have the best prospects for success. Adaptive management is important for the design of good peer-learning processes that respond to the needs and interests of participants, thus ensuring they own and drive processes. This applies both to themes discussed and the learning mechanisms used (Harvey et al., 2017). Expecting peer-learning facilitators to specify topics and number of workshops reduces the potential for ownership by participants.
- ▶ **5. Consider the wider context for peer learning, such as barriers and enablers to action and how learning will be applied in that context:** Peer learning is more likely to be effective if it acknowledges barriers and opportunities for change beyond the knowledge and skills of individuals (see Section 3) and recognizes that learning does not automatically translate into action. Think of peer learning in relation to other interventions and

¹² See Effective Institutions Platform (2021a) for lessons and case studies about building trust and mutuality.

consider how learners can be supported to implement their learning—for example, by requiring organizations to commit to supporting employees to share and act on their learning within their organization or by providing seed funding for follow-up on actions such as attending events or exchanges.

- ▶ **6. Invest in monitoring and evaluation of peer learning:** This should consider the ways in which individual learning contributes to organizational and systems change, thereby building the evidence base about when and how to use peer-learning approaches.

Three ways for funders and implementers to support peer-learning processes beyond financing:

- ▶ **1. Act as brokers between potential peers,** drawing on international relationships and global perspectives to act as matchmakers between people and organizations experiencing (and responding to) similar challenges, as well as helping to diffuse innovative practices.
- ▶ **2. Advocate for the value of peer learning as an approach,** drawing on examples and the growing evidence base about what kinds of challenges might be best addressed through peer-to-peer approaches compared with other forms of support.
- ▶ **3. Use peer-learning methods to strengthen capacity on project delivery,** exchanging and learning with peers about increasing the effectiveness of project implementation, including the way it is used to support capacity development for climate action.

This guide has outlined how peer learning is particularly relevant to the challenges of climate change. The author and contributors to the guide hope it inspires readers to learn more about harnessing the potential of this approach to drive positive climate action.

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SouthSouthNorth. (2020a). *Catalysing a regional climate finance knowledge network in Southern Africa: Stakeholder experiences* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DP0vV2_p7jw

Appendix A. Recommended Further Reading and Resources

High-Level Peer-Learning Platforms

Effective Institutions Platform: An alliance of over 60 countries and organizations that support peer learning on public sector management and institutional reform, hosted by the OECD Development Assistance Committee. It has a wide range of resources about peer learning, including some specifically aimed at funders. <https://www.effectiveinstitutions.org>

SouthSouthFacility: A multi-donor trust fund to support peer learning led by the World Bank Group. The website includes tools and resources for designing learning programs and outcomes stories that show how South–South peer learning can inspire decision-makers and development practitioners. <https://www.southsouthfacility.org/>

SouthSouthNorth. (2020b). *Enhancing capacity to access climate finance in Southern Africa: Experiences of SACFP stakeholders* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DP0vV2_p7jw

Task Team on South–South Cooperation. (2010). *Boosting South–South cooperation in the context of aid effectiveness: Telling the story of partners involved in more than 110 cases of South–South and triangular cooperation*. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/46080462.pdf>

Volonte, C., Garcia, J., & Gonzalez, M. (2021). *Final evaluation of the United States Department of State support for the National Adaptation Plan Global Network*. <https://napglobalnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/napgn-en-2021-evaluation-baastel-2020-executive-summary.pdf>

World Bank Group/Global Environment Facility. (2017). *The art of knowledge exchange: A results-based planning guide for the GEF partnership*. <https://www.thegef.org/publications/art-knowledge-exchange-results-focused-planning-guide-gef-partnership>

Resources to Support the Design of Peer Learning

The EIP Peer Learning Guide: How to Make Peer-to-Peer Support and Learning Effective in the Public Sector? This useful guide from the EIP builds on research about the peer-learning process, focused on large-scale processes for public sector reform. It includes a useful breakdown of stages, with questions to consider at each stage and suggestions of approaches. https://www.effectiveinstitutions.org/files/EIP_Peer_to_peer_Learning_Guide.pdf

The Art of Knowledge Exchange: A Results-Focused Planning Guide for the GEF Partnership Guide offering a practical step-by-step blueprint with illustrative examples on how to design, implement, and measure progress on knowledge exchange initiatives embedded in projects. <https://www.thegef.org/publications/art-knowledge-exchange-results-focused-planning-guide-gef-partnership>

Facilitating Peer Learning With Adaptation Policy-Makers: Approaches and Insights From the NAP Global Network’s Targeted Topics Forums Short introduction to the design considerations and facilitation approaches used in the NAP GN peer learning events, produced at the request of participants. <https://napglobalnetwork.org/resource/facilitating-peer-learning-with-adaptation-policy-makers/>

Appendix B. Related Concepts

Peer learning, like capacity building, is an imprecise term. Individuals and organizations often use different terms to mean the same thing and, conversely, use the same term to refer to different approaches and practices.

This section aims to highlight the similarities and differences between the closely related practices of instruction,

knowledge sharing, and social learning, as illustrated in Table A1. Understanding the difference in emphasis between the approaches is important when designing interventions, it is important to stress that definitions vary, there are no clear boundaries between these approaches, and they are often used in combination.

Table A1. Comparison between peer learning and related concepts

	Traditional instruction	Knowledge sharing	Peer learning	Social learning
Key elements and assumptions	Emphasis on technical knowledge transfer, expert knowledge	Emphasis on sharing and documentation of practical experience, e.g., lessons learned good practice	Emphasis on learning together from experience to address common challenges that learners then apply	Emphasis on drawing on multiple knowledges to generate solutions for specific challenges
Examples of activities and approaches	Training courses, technical assistance, massive open online courses, webinars Cohort learning activities, such as discussions, group tasks, social media	Communities of practice, writeshops and other support for documentation, webinars	Exchanges, site visits, action learning sets, learning circles, reflective practice, methods, problem-focused peer assistance, peer review	Co-production and co-construction methods, innovation labs, learning labs
Examples of programs that use this approach ¹³	Widely used	PANORAMA solutions South–South Galaxy Gobeshona	NAP-GN Southern African Climate Finance Partnership SouthSouthNorth	FRACTAL Climate-KIC deep demonstrations
		LEDS Global Partnership		

¹³ Note that programs may place themselves in multiple categories or define their work differently.

Appendix C. Examples of Peer Learning in Practice

Harnessing Peer Learning to Strengthen National Adaptation Plan (NAP) Processes: The NAP Global Network, IISD, Canada

Purpose: The NAP Global Network supports developing countries in advancing their NAP processes.

Who is involved: Members include individual participants from more than 155 countries, much of the NAP Global Network's work is with the NAP team in the ministry tasked with leading a country's NAP process.

Contribution of peer learning: The NAP Global Network has developed a “value chain” of mutually supportive activities that can accelerate the shift from knowledge to action: technical assistance, peer learning and exchange, and knowledge resources. Peer learning is an essential part of this mutually reinforcing package of support and a key enabler for the Network's technical assistance and knowledge offering.

Approach to peer learning: Peer learning and exchange on national adaptation planning and action have been facilitated through: a) cohort-based South–South peer-learning events (targeted topics forums) in which two cohorts of adaptation policy-makers and practitioners from 23 countries met annually; b) peer learning summits, stand-alone events structured around a theme, e.g., monitoring and evaluation of national adaptation; and c) South–South Peer Exchanges.

Insights about peer learning identified by NAP Global Network include:

1. **The cohort model was valuable and worth replicating** as it supported development of supportive relationships between countries, thus accelerating learning within events and communication between them. Turnover of government representatives was a challenge. Participation from multiple ministries in events supported the development of relationships within countries and contributed to cross-government collaboration in their NAP processes.
2. **Facilitation matters and is directly relevant to advancing NAP processes.** Consistent feedback from participants highlighted how effective and important the facilitation was in their learning; particularly popular were “knowledge marketplaces” (Harvey & Fisher, 2019). Participants requested training in facilitation so it could be applied in NAP processes.

3. **The quality of NAP processes and products has improved as result of NAP Global Network activities,** for example, in terms of content, speed, and consultation, according to an independent evaluation. It is difficult to tease out the particular contribution of peer learning: examples suggest it contributes to connecting global and local knowledge and inspiring broader engagement and consultation in changes in NAP processes (Volonte et al., 2021, pp. 40–42).

Further resources on peer learning in the NAP Global Network.

NAP Global Network. (2021).
Resilience in action: Five years of supporting National Adaptation Plan (NAP) processes.
International Institute for Sustainable Development.
<https://napglobalnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/napgn-en-2021-resilience-in-action.pdf>

Harvey, B. & Fisher, C. (2019).
Facilitating peer learning with adaptation policy-makers.
International Institute for Sustainable Development.
<https://www.iisd.org/publications/facilitating-peer-learning-adaptation-policy-makers>

Volonte, C., Garcia, J., & Gonzalez, M. (2021).
Final evaluation of the United States Department of State support for the National Adaptation Plan Global Network.
<https://napglobalnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/napgn-en-2021-evaluation-baastel-2020-executive-summary.pdf>

NAP Global Network website:
<https://napglobalnetwork.org/>

Enhancing Capacity to Access Climate Finance in Southern Africa: The Southern Africa Climate Finance Partnership (SACFP), SouthSouthNorth, South Africa

Purpose: The focus of the SACFP is improved access to and implementation of catalytic sources of climate finance by Southern African countries.

Who is involved: The SACFP works with key public and private institutions in six Southern African countries. Peer learning aims to strengthen the capacity of individuals with responsibility for climate finance within priority government agencies and direct access entities accredited to the Green Climate Fund to act as leaders, diffusing and applying knowledge within their organizations.

Contribution of peer learning: The SACFP is a community of practice for knowledge sharing, capacity enhancement, and supporting national and regional collaboration. Peer-learning activities are highly integrated with other activities, namely: a) targeted technical assistance, an institutional-level intervention that supplements peer-to-peer learning by mobilizing relevant experience from within the region, and; b) academic research, to which peer learning contributes to ensuring that the public goods created are applicable and demand driven.

Approach to peer learning: Within SACFP, peer learning: a) is based on a participatory capacity needs assessment with each organization; b) takes place within an ongoing community of practice in which core members are supported by a technical reference group, supplemented with participation from practitioners in other regions; c) is centred around bilateral and regional workshops, between which participants are encouraged to ask for and provide reciprocal support.

Insights about peer learning identified by SACFP include:

1. **The importance of “bonding moments” in workshops** for breaking down barriers between participants, supporting them to connect as human beings and building the foundations for them to ask for and give advice during the workshop and afterwards. This is illustrated in a video by SouthSouthNorth (2020a).
2. **Peer-to-peer learning generated an increased sense of agency among key institutions and individuals,** which translated into willingness and courage to act as change agents and drive new strategic initiatives within organizations to use climate finance in a catalytic manner.

3. **The process created greater connectivity and improved cooperation between stakeholders at both national and regional levels,** enabling sharing of ideas, tips, and “ways of working” between practitioners to better relay climate finance into implementation and prompting discussions about collective action and positions in relation to accessing climate finance.

Further resources on peer learning in SACFP

Participants' reflections on their experience of SACFP and its outcomes are captured in a series of videos:

SouthSouthNorth. (2018).
Learning into action: Leveraging climate finance in Southern Africa [Video]. Youtube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6fDcZp06pk>

SouthSouthNorth. (2020b).
Enhancing capacity to access climate finance in Southern Africa: Experiences of SACFP stakeholders [Video]. YouTube.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DP0vV2_p7jw

SouthSouthNorth. (2021).
Catalyzing climate finance for the Southern African Development Community: Executive summary annual report.
<https://southsouthnorth.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/210531-SACFP-III-Executive-Summary-Annual-Report.pdf>

SACFP website:
https://southsouthnorth.org/portfolio_page/southern-africa-climate-finance-partnership-sacfp/



Learning from other regional partners opens up a different dimension. You realise that many are experiencing similar challenges and, in some cases, have already addressed a challenge you are experiencing. It also gives the opportunity to speak with one voice when you speak in the international community, to say “this is the challenge we are facing as a region.

Shahkira Parker, Department of Environmental Affairs, South Africa reflecting on her experience of peer learning within the SACFP SouthSouthNorth. (2018).



