

Reclaiming Civic Space to Confront the Climate Emergency

Invitation to Present Concept Notes

Request for Concept Notes

IDRC seeks concept notes from a targeted group of organizations to support new research that responds to the intersection of two global challenges of the climate emergency and closing civic spaces in the Global South.

Background

The negative impacts of climate change are, and will be, disproportionately experienced by marginalized and excluded populations in the Global South. As countries strive to keep global warming under 1.5⁰ C, in the next coming years, societies around the world will initiate and feel the impacts of multiple societal responses to climate change. These responses will take place from local to global scales, will occur simultaneously, and will likely interact with one another in unpredictable ways. All these responses to the climate emergency – or the failure to respond – will bring with them societal transitions at multiple scales that hold the possibility to create or exacerbate inequalities and injustices. They also hold the potential to transform society to build a more resilient, just and equitable future.

In many contexts across the Global South, responses to – or the failure to respond – to the climate emergency intersect with a larger set of challenges of democratic and inclusive governance. Populations living in situations of vulnerability are on many occasions excluded from policies and decision-making processes to address climate change that directly affect their social, political and economic conditions. Their exclusion, in turn, often reflects larger structural inequalities and exclusion in society. In addition, in many contexts, civic space¹ is increasingly closing or under attack. Indigenous and Afro-descendent peoples and climate and environmental justice defenders are the most [targeted group of human rights defenders in the region and globally](#). These actors, the social movements and communities they support, have faced criminalization, arbitrary arrests and imprisonment, and direct threats to their lives and physical security by State, non-State, licit and illicit actors. Digital surveillance and misinformation on social media targeting climate defenders, social movements and activists is alarmingly on the rise. Few opportunities existing in turn to access justice and push back against impunity where people's rights are not respected.

Tackling the climate emergency will require vibrant civic spaces, which enable marginalized and excluded populations, especially women, to claim their rights, have a strong voice and participation in policy and decision-making processes that affect them and access effective accountability mechanisms. Further, there are inspiring experiences, where individuals, organizations and communities, working with their networks at local, national, regional, and international levels, have sought to identify the conditions for

¹ CIVICUS and OECD offer definitions of the concept of “civic space” that are helpful references and can be consulted here: [What is civic space? - CIVICUS - Tracking conditions for citizen action](#); [Civic Space - OECD](#).

[transformative climate justice](#). From that standpoint, responses to climate change stand as opportunities to open new spaces for civic engagement, propel the realisation of gender equality and social inclusion, and reinforce democratic governance at all scales.

IDRC's Democratic and Inclusive Governance program seeks to support new research, centred around the experiences of climate and environmental defenders, activists, organizations, social movements and affected communities, that seeks to generate: (i) a deeper understanding of the nature and drivers of the threats they face, in contexts of closing civic space, (ii) effective strategies to respond to threats and promote the rights of those populations; (iii) effective strategies for civil society actors and social movements to promote greater gender equality and social inclusion in climate policies and action; (iv) lessons on how climate and environmental defenders, activists and social movements can build stronger alliances with other movements and actors, as a test case for countering closing civic spaces and related threats.

Research Questions:

1. *Threats*: What are the social, economic, political or digital drivers of the threats and challenges to climate and environmental defenders, social movements, organizations and affected communities? How do these relate to larger threats to civic space?
2. *Protecting & Promoting Rights*: What are effective strategies, on the ground or online, for climate defenders and affected communities to respond to direct threats (e.g. as defenders or from climate action), and to promote their rights, with an emphasis on women leaders and marginalized groups?
3. *Policy Engagement*: What strategies are effective for civil society actors and social movements to participate in decision-making and policy processes and promote greater gender equality and social inclusion in climate policies and action at multiple scales (national, regional, global)?
4. *Building Alliances and Movements*: How can climate defenders and social movements learn from and build alliances with other movements and actors in civic space, as part of efforts to promote more inclusive climate action and policies, and counter closing civic spaces?

Research project ideas should include the following elements:

- Research teams with a strong track record on climate justice and human rights, especially supporting environmental defenders, organizations and communities excluded from climate policy or facing threats from climate action.
- Research ideas that demonstrate promising potential for supporting innovative or scalable results for strengthening civic space for affected populations.
- Well defined links to climate policy processes or spaces, in the research countries and at the regional and global levels.

- Multi-disciplinary research teams involving consortia of civil society organizations, particularly of populations in situations of vulnerability, with researchers from universities or policy think tanks.
- An emphasis on contexts of political, security and societal fragility.²

Application process:

The concept notes should pursue a regional focus, involving multi-country studies (e.g. three countries), encompassing the following regions:

- One from Latin America and the Caribbean (with focus on Indigenous and Afro-descendant Peoples)
- Two from Asia (one per subregion: Southeast Asia and South Asia).
- Two from Africa (one per subregion: East Africa and West Africa).
- One from Middle East and North Africa.
- In addition to the regional focus, one at inter-regional level will be selected with focus on online attacks on climate defenders.
- One for a knowledge translation support for cross-project learning, synthesis and dissemination.

Funding is tentatively available for each research project of up to **CAD \$950,000** and for a duration from **30 to 36 months**. The knowledge translation project has a maximal budget of CAD \$600,000.

Interested applicants are invited to submit a Concept Note of 5 to 7 pages using the template in Annex I by **May 26, 2023**.

Applications received after the deadline will not be considered.

Applications can be submitted in Spanish, English, French or Portuguese.

An acknowledgement of receipt of your submission will be sent to all applicants whose application was received before the deadline.

For questions, please contact dig-gdi@idrc.ca

Stage	Date
1. The invitation to present concept notes is sent out	April 10, 2023
2. Information webinar	April 25, 2023
3. Concept Notes are submitted by the deadline	May 26, 2023
4. Late, incomplete and ineligible applications are eliminated	May 29, 2023
5. A review committee comprised of IDRC staff will read and score concept notes based on the evaluation criteria (see below)	May 30, 2023
6. Short-listed applicants are invited to develop their concept notes into full proposals (Grant application kit: a quick tour IDRC - International Development Research Centre)	June 12, 2023

² See e.g. [States of Fragility](#), OECD, for definitions of different types of fragility.

Unsuccessful applicants notified. *** N.B. The invitation to develop a full proposal at this stage does not guarantee that it will be funded by IDRC	
7. Full proposals are developed and submitted for final revision to IDRC.	July 17, 2023
8. IDRC conducts an institutional assessment of each applicant invited to finalize a proposal	July – August, 2023
9. Successful proposals are approved for funding	September 2023
10. Applicant completes any applicable country approval procedures	Oct. – Nov. 2023
11. IDRC and the applicant enter into a Grant Agreement	Sept. – Dec. 2023

Gender, Inclusion & Intersectionality:

IDRC strives for equality in all aspects of its work. We support the generation of knowledge — including by individuals from diverse genders, communities, histories, and experiences — that tackles the systems which perpetuate inequalities based on identity. Inequalities exist across multiple and intersecting categories of identity, including, but not limited to, the following: gender, sexuality, age, class, race, caste, ethnicity, citizenship status, religion, and ability. Taking an intersectional approach to gender equality recognizes these differences and understands diversity as central to advancing equality. Given that gender inequality is a significant barrier across all dimensions of diversity, IDRC invests specific efforts in ensuring its work promotes gender equality and inclusion. For additional background, please see IDRC’s Equality Statement.

Contributing to a global group of IDRC-funded projects:

IDRC anticipates funding an initial group of approximately seven research projects, across regions in the global South (see above). In addition, IDRC will support activities and processes to build links across research projects, with the aim of building a larger comparative body of knowledge, sharing of lessons across projects and regions, and identifying potential opportunities for global or regional dissemination and policy influence.

Organizations invited to develop final proposals for research projects will be expected to include plans and budget for regional and global knowledge sharing activities, and to participate in the cross-project activities. IDRC responsible officers will provide needed guidance at that stage.

An emphasis will be placed on developing knowledge sharing plans that are led by project teams. To help ensure those aims on an ongoing basis, an advisory group with representatives across projects is envisaged once research commences.

IDRC will also support an additional knowledge translation project, which will play a lead role in facilitating efforts to build the links, lessons-sharing, synthesis and dissemination across research projects, themes and regions.

Organizations participating in this call for concept notes are welcome to be considered for that knowledge translation project grant. An additional concept note would be required. If interested, please

consult the Call for Concept Notes for the Knowledge Translation project, which was included with this Note with more detailed instructions on that separate Call for Concept Notes process.

Evaluation and Selection Criteria:

Proposals will be assessed on the basis of the following experience and competencies. *Projects that are not selected in the first round may be kept for a possible second round of funding, if applicable.*

<p>Research Merit & Feasibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrated logic between the different stages of the research process, solid methodology and research design, including gender integration and intersectionality • Clarity of research questions, objectives and methodology • Clarity of design (including context/justification, objectives, methodology, results) • Identification of ethical implications of the research and other risks, and presentation of a sound mitigation strategy • Appropriateness of the budget and timelines in relation to the proposed activities 	25%
<p>Knowledge and Experience</p> <p>Suitability of research team and institution(s), based on a description of roles and responsibilities, including clear evidence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge and demonstrated experience conducting high quality research • Knowledge and experience in the areas of environmental rights, human rights defenders and climate change policy • Contextual knowledge of the proposed geographic region • Demonstrated experience in producing high-level well-written knowledge products • Demonstrated experience in positioning research findings to influence policy, practice and positive change at local and national levels • Gender and inclusion considerations reflected in research team composition, expertise and organizations comprising the team 	25%
<p>Gender Analysis Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong understanding of and ability to apply a gender integration and intersectionality lens to research related to vulnerable groups in general and women in particular • Clear gender considerations evident throughout the proposal • Demonstration of how gender will be integrated into the research process and project activities and results 	25%
<p>Relevance & Policy Uptake/Knowledge Translation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of innovation and clear need and demand for research • Evidence that the proposed research has thought through appropriate strategies for dissemination and promotion of policy uptake, in both climate and human rights arenas, and for integrating a gender and intersectionality lens • Clear established links between project organization(s) and national/regional/global advocacy networks and policy processes related respectively to climate change and human rights • Clear plans for publication and dissemination of results through traditional academic and non-traditional channels, including research participants 	25%

Permission for use and disclosure of information:

As a Canadian Crown corporation, IDRC is subject to Canada's Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act. Consequently, any submissions in response to this call for concept notes will be managed by IDRC in a manner consistent with applicable legislation and IDRC's Privacy Policy, including IDRC's obligations to disclose documents requested by members of the public or requests for personal information. For more information on how IDRC manages information in accordance with this legislation can be accessed [here](#).

CONCEPT NOTE INFORMATION - REQUIRED FROM IDRC PARTNERS

Concept notes should be a maximum of 7 pages in length, not including bibliography, budget or annexes.

1. Abstract of the project

The abstract should follow roughly the following structure: background, problem, research question and objectives, methodology, and potential impact. The abstract should be suitable for public dissemination (avoid acronyms and technical jargon). Maximum 300 words.

2. Research problem and justification

Describe the problem that is to be investigated and provide a justification of the project.

3. Research objectives

Provide a clear and concise description of both the general objective and specific objectives of the research, objectives should be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound.

4. Methodology

Describe the proposed project design and methodology. Please include a timeline. Ensure that methods are aligned with the objectives.

5. Gender equality and social inclusion

Describe how gender equality and social inclusion considerations will be integrated into your project. IDRC is committed to long-term transformative and lasting change. That means that gender equality and social inclusion need to be considerations for building evidence and for anticipating impact in all projects. Projects can be located along the spectrum of gender sensitive and responsive to gender transformative in design. Please refer to IDRC's [Equality Statement](#).

6. Collaboration

Describe the roles and responsibilities of the various project organizations in delivering the stated objectives of the project. Details of in-kind contributions, if any, should be provided in this section.

7. Capacity building

Describe any capacity building and training aspects of the proposed research project (including younger researchers, partners organizations, government officers, and community groups).

8. Project outputs/outcomes

Outline expected results (outputs and outcomes) of the project in relation to the stated objectives beneficiaries.

9. Monitoring and evaluation

Describe how the project will carry out monitoring and evaluation activities.

10. Risks and mitigation strategies

Provide a concise, but thorough assessment of potential risks related to the project, especially security risks, and include a description of planned risk mitigation strategies.

11. Results and communication

Provide a description of expected key results and outputs of the project. Include a proposed research-into-use strategy, including target audience(s), engagement processes, etc in order to support the uptake and impact of project results. We recommend consulting the Open Access Policy for IDRC-Funded Project Outputs.

12. Ethics

State significant ethical considerations likely to arise from the proposed research, as well as strategies for their mitigation and management. State whether formal review of ethics is required due to the nature of the research. State the name(s) and coordinates of the relevant institutional research ethics board or committee.

13. Bibliographic references

14. Budget

The first draft can be in word format, we will share the IDRC template once this has been reviewed.

Please indicate if the project is part of a larger project or program of research

Please list other current donors to the project or program, and

Please indicate if fundraising is needed to complement the project or program

15. Annex

CVs of researchers

Brief overview of organizations submitting the proposal