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# **Evidence and Learning in the Context of Climate Change**

## An Invitation to Take Action

February 2025



# Context

We stand at a pivotal juncture in the global climate crisis - where urgent action is needed in order to stave off the worst consequences of an increasingly warming planet.

In recent years, the world has seen an unprecedented surge of commitments to address both the causes and consequences of climate change. Many major emitters have adopted net zero targets and nations have pledged to strengthen resilience against rising sea levels, extreme weather, and other climate-related disruptions. Between 2023 and 2024, investments by governments, multilateral organizations and funds, philanthropies, and the private sector in climate-related projects totaled a record \$1.9 trillion USD.

Yet, these efforts are not enough. Global emissions continue to rise to historic highs, and financial commitments fall \$3-4 trillion below what is needed annually to meet global climate goals and keep the Paris Agreement's 2°C target within reach.

And the complexity, urgency, and scale of the climate crisis cannot be solved through technical solutions alone. It demands transformational changes that reduce risks while delivering tangible benefits for both people and nature. In this context, the task before us is two-fold: expand the evidence base so that available resources are channeled to the most effective, equitable climate solutions, while leveraging that evidence base to unlock additional public, private, and philanthropic resources for climate action.

This is where those dedicated to climate evidence generation and results have distinctive contributions to make toward global climate action. To meet the moment, we must change how we work in a way that is responsive to the challenge we're up against—one which is complex, urgent, and global in nature.

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## An invitation to take action

**We invite those who commission, generate, and use evidence, evaluation, and insights, to join us in taking these bold actions.**

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## 1

## Shift focus from projects to systems transformation

An unprecedented number of global actors are mobilizing to address the climate crisis - though too frequently in isolation from each other. In this context, evidence is most valuable when it illuminates the interconnectedness and cumulative impact of collective efforts toward transforming systems.

Conventional evaluation of projects or programs, or broader evidence generation work seeking to attribute outcomes to individual players, provides insufficient understanding of collective results, and the extent to which the structures and systems that created or sustain the climate crisis are shifting. To understand progress at the scale required, we need to shift our focus from isolated outcomes attributable to specific actors to a focus on collective work leading to systemic transformations.

**We must therefore widen the aperture of our inquiry and consider how collective efforts to lessen the causes and consequences of climate change are greater than the sum of their individual parts. And we must continually question the extent to which climate actions and investments are moving the needle in creating the necessary enabling conditions and driving wider transformational change.**

## 2

## Become champions of evidence-informed decision making

We must see ourselves as stakeholders in the climate crisis and embrace more active roles in addressing it. The primacy that the evaluation and learning field has historically placed on independence and objectivity can limit the impact of our contributions in addressing climate change. But we have the opportunity to adopt a more valuable role - one in which we combat misinformation and act as advocates for evidence and results within the climate movement and contribute meaningfully to advancing effective and equitable climate action.

**This shift requires that we reconceptualize what defines the success of evidence generation and evaluation. Evidence cannot be judged solely or primarily in technical terms, based on methods or notions of independence.**

These qualities, while important, are insufficient if they aren't keeping pace with the speed at which decisions need to be made. Instead, the mark of successful evaluation ought to lie in the utility and uptake of evidence in shaping or informing realworld decisions and in mobilizing scarce resources.

**This means shifting from a passive approach—where evidence is simply produced and disseminated—to an active one.**



To support uptake and use, we must right-size our toolkit to meet decision-makers' needs as quickly and credibly as possible, and see it as our role to facilitate sense-making, foster dialogue, and advocate for what the evidence shows about effective and equitable climate solutions.

### 3 Deploy evaluative practice early and often

Climate evaluation should not be confined to specific tools or discrete moments at the end of a project. The dynamism of climate change demands attentiveness to potential impacts, rapid evidence generation, learning and ongoing course correction throughout.

The evaluative toolkit - which lends itself to interrogating outcomes, planning in the face of uncertainty, unpacking causal logic, focusing on results and how they can be achieved most efficiently, bringing forward insights and evidence, surfacing unintended consequences, and centering the voices of those who are meant to benefit from the work we measure or assess—has significant value throughout the lifecycle of a project, program, strategy or investment.

**In the face of the climate crisis and other compounding crises, where rapid transformation is needed, the evaluative toolkit must be integrated throughout the lifecycle of strategies, programs, and policies. From early design, strategy and planning, to adaptive implementation, evaluative practice can help drive sound decision making, identify emergent risks and opportunities, and narrow in on the most impactful strategic path forward.**

## 4 Embrace multiple ways of knowing

In addressing a crisis as urgent and complex as climate change, we must move beyond traditional definitions of evidence shaped by scientific protocols and move to evidence that is sufficient to inform decisions that need to be made in real-time.

**We must get comfortable broadening our definition of evidence and working with many forms of data and ways of knowing. This includes observational data, digital data, and multimedia data such as stories, images, and videos. Social media analysis and AI technologies highlight the dynamic ways in which knowledge is being generated. Partnering with communities impacted by interventions we are evaluating, and co-creating evidence can provide valuable sources of insight while also providing space for the voices of vulnerable communities in designing solutions.**

**In particular, when focused on climate, Indigenous methods of knowledge gathering are vital. For millennia and to this day, Indigenous people have been in relationship with the environment in ways that have generated deep wisdom from which all can learn. These methods must always be applied respectfully and appropriately, in partnership with Indigenous communities.**

## 5 Learn collectively to scale impact

Because our climate challenges are shared and our solutions are interdependent, we must deepen our collective knowledge so that we can act with greater alignment and achieve greater impact and at greater speed. When we fail to share our evidence and lessons—across countries, institutions, sectors, and disciplines—we miss opportunities to build on each other's successes, and we risk duplicating mistakes. Learning together brings significant and necessary efficiency gains in our work.

**To learn faster and get smarter together, we need to be increasingly willing to share what works and what does not more quickly and openly. In places where our work overlaps or in areas where we are working toward shared outcomes, we need to build up evidence around common questions, pool our evaluative resources, and work together to generate and use insights.**

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## Conclusion

As those that generate, fund, and use evidence and evaluations, we have the opportunity to enhance the strategic relevance and impact of our work in addressing the climate crisis.

Wherever your starting point in your climate evaluation and learning practice, we invite you to join us in meeting this moment.

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