

BRIEF ACTIONABLE RESEARCH AGENDA ON:

Building Human and Institutional Capacity

EfD

Environment for Development

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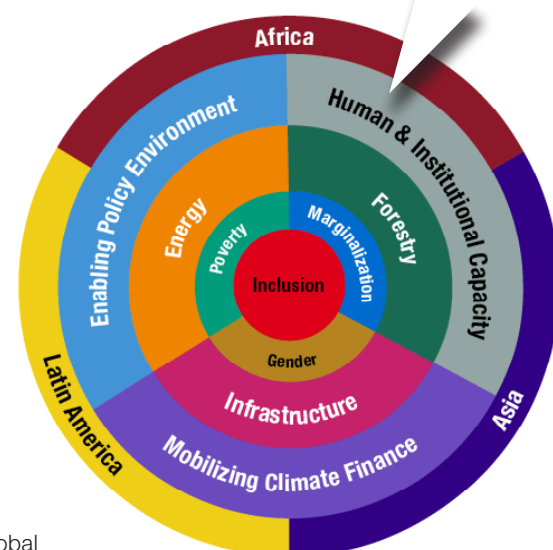
■ ■ Assessment of individual, organizational, and institutional capacities is important to accelerate the pace of transition to a low-carbon economy. Human and Institutional Capacity is part of a larger initiative to identify the most promising research issues to support an actionable low-carbon transition in the Global South.

Aim: To identify the capacity limitations that are slowing the transition to a low-carbon economy in developing countries, and the interventions in training and institutional arrangements that could, cost-efficiently, mitigate the direct and external costs of that transition as it occurs.

Background: The transition to a low-carbon economy has been slower in the Global South, where many states have failed to meet both their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) in terms of the Paris Agreement and their self-identified Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs). These failures may reflect the low priority the countries ascribe to a low-carbon transition (LCT), relative to other goals such as economic growth, or they may indicate a lack of capacity in the short term and medium term. In the long term, each country should also have a voluntary Low Emissions Development Strategy (LEDS) which is aligned with its short-term obligations. Whether or not the strategies and commitments can be aligned over time will be determined by the available human resources and technical capacity, as well as policy choices and institutional realities. The problem is how best to address short-term, medium-term and long-term gaps in LCT capacity, given the budgetary constraints and multiple challenges facing most developing countries.

A major gap lies in identifying the optimal contribution of each region in the Global South to the LCT. Only a few developing countries contribute significantly to global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions; the emissions per capita of others tend to be particularly low. This reality, together with their patterns of imports from and exports to the developed world, provide important context. For example, economic tools intended to encourage LCT at a national level may simply make it cheaper to import goods made under less climate-smart conditions.

Method: Through conducting a human and institutional capacity needs assessment, the voice of practitioners was sought on what is required for LCT to happen effectively on the ground. This approach revealed that, in addition to facilitating high-impact research, commensurate investment in human and institutional capacity is required for research to effectively drive LCT.



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The transition to a low-carbon economy has been slower in the Global South



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Opportunities for high impact research

Despite ongoing technical research into LCTs, progress toward them has been slow. Country- level studies are needed to establish whether the problem lies in poor expression of scientific and engineering findings; in unwillingness or inability of policy makers to use such research findings appropriately; or in institutional rigidity.

The productivity of human resources is determined by the technology available, the policies in place, and the institutional setting. Therefore, it is important to establish which investments, policies and institutions offer the most cost-effective initial approaches to a LCT. Such planning is especially important if building long-term capacity will require changes to the organizational structures of local institutions.

In terms of human capacity, it is important to identify the core skills required to promote a low-carbon transition, and which skills will be needed to help workers and managers adapt to the changes that a LCT will impose. A key issue is whether the requisite new knowledge and professional workforce will be better generated in local research institutes or imported from abroad. Local research on LCTs in the Global South may be shaped by the demands of funders, the security of their funding, and the mandates they give to researchers, especially regarding their breadth and depth of focus (such as single or multi-sector).

One question is how best to address specific gaps in human capacity – through academic study and research, on the job training, via Science Policy Institutes, or through practical Private/Public Partnerships. Again, the answer is likely to depend largely on context. Two practical considerations are the need for lifetime learning by engineers and technicians, and the flexibility of thought that is needed to assimilate new ideas. Research agendas should tackle inertia, because well-intentioned participants in academia, government and industry may be held back until there is a critical mass of people who understand the issues and are equipped to address them.

Another question is how to ensure stability in the flow of funds needed for a LCT. The transition to a low-carbon economy can be funded domestically (by the state or the private sector) and from abroad. Whether the source is donor aid, lending, government grants, or global carbon markets, research is needed to design a flow of funds that is predictable, large enough, and transparently managed. Research is also needed to project long-term benefits of financing, since LCT does not yield immediately measurable results.

A major concern for public sector researchers is the design of a nation's medium- and long-term fiscal frameworks with a view to LCT, i.e., identifying the optimal long-run low emission strategies, and fitting them within the budget frameworks.

From a regional policy researcher's perspective, a concern is the alignment between each government's international obligations in respect of climate issues, and their policies regarding other state objectives. It is crucial to determine the extent to which fiscal tools (taxes and subsidies) and monetary tools (interest and exchange rate policies) help or hinder the achievement of a low-carbon transition.

**Access the High-Level
Research Agenda:
<https://bit.ly/3zyfp1P>**

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