Roundtable on Community and Indigenous Knowledge for Climate Resilience

1st December 2025

IDRC Office, Cannaught Place, New Delhi, India

As part of the DECODE Reflections, the UNESCO Chair, along with IDRC organised a roundtable conference to reflect on how community- and Indigenous-led research can be better supported in responding to the climate crisis. The roundtable brought together researchers, practitioners, and representatives from research funding organisations (see Annexure 2) to examine the current knowledge landscape and discuss how funding and institutional mechanisms can enable more participatory, decolonised, and action-oriented research.

The discussion opened with reflections on the current state of the world of knowledge,

Roundtable Conversation at IDRC, New Delhi

particularly the continued dominance of academic and donor-driven research agendas. Participants noted that while interest in community and Indigenous knowledge systems is growing, these forms of knowledge remain under-recognised and underfunded. This raised critical questions about whose knowledge is valued, how research priorities are set, and how funding structures can shift power toward communities and Indigenous peoples.

A key focus of the roundtable was the responsibility of DECODE and other knowledge workers to share and amplify place-based knowledges and to shape education and research practices accordingly. Participants reflected on how universities can contribute by synthesising and disseminating community knowledge without extracting or decontextualising it. While local solutions are essential for addressing local problems, it was emphasised that the models and principles underpinning such solutions- ethical co-construction, participatory governance, and community ownership- can be replicated across contexts.

The DECODE project was discussed as an example of how community- and Indigenous-led research can produce actionable knowledge for climate resilience. Drawing on its multi-country case studies, participants highlighted the importance of open knowledge networks

and community knowledge centres in sustaining learning and collaboration beyond individual projects. Opportunities for open learning were seen as essential for strengthening knowledge democracy and supporting climate action.

Discussions also centred on how funding mechanisms can better recognise distinct knowledge cultures and support long-term, trust-based partnerships. Participants emphasised that community and Indigenous knowledge is cultural and spiritual, rooted in sustainability and expressed through local languages and practices. Women's leadership and knowledge were identified as central to environmental resilience, with recognition of women's holistic knowledge also contributing to shifts in gender relations.

The roundtable stressed the importance of early and ongoing dialogue on knowledge sharing, ownership, and benefits within research partnerships. Co-management and co-governance approaches were seen as critical for strengthening knowledge mobilisation and ensuring sustained impact. Methodological diversity, including arts-based and culturally appropriate approaches, was highlighted as essential for creating safe spaces for collaboration, while diverse dissemination strategies were needed to ensure research reaches all stakeholders.

Overall, the roundtable underscored the need for funding and institutional environments that support community- and Indigenous-led research as a core pathway to producing actionable, locally grounded knowledge for climate resilience.

ANNEXURE 2
List of Roundtable on Community and Indigenous Knowledge for Climate Resilience Participants, IDRC, New Delhi

- **Budd Hall**
  Co-Chair, UNESCO Chair in Community-Based Participatory Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education
  University of Victoria, Canada

- **Rajesh Tandon**
  Founder- President PRIA ; Co-Chair, UNESCO Chair in Community-Based Participatory Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education, New Delhi

- **Olivia Andrade De Almeida**
  Project Manager, Decode Project, University of Victoria, Canada

- **Arjan De Haan**
  Senior Programme Specialist, International Development Research Centre, New Delhi

- **IDRC Ottowa**

- **Commonwealth of Learning**

a. Basheerhamad Shadrach

- **School of Pubic Policy, Indian Institute of Technology**

a. Sheba Shadrach

- **Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office**