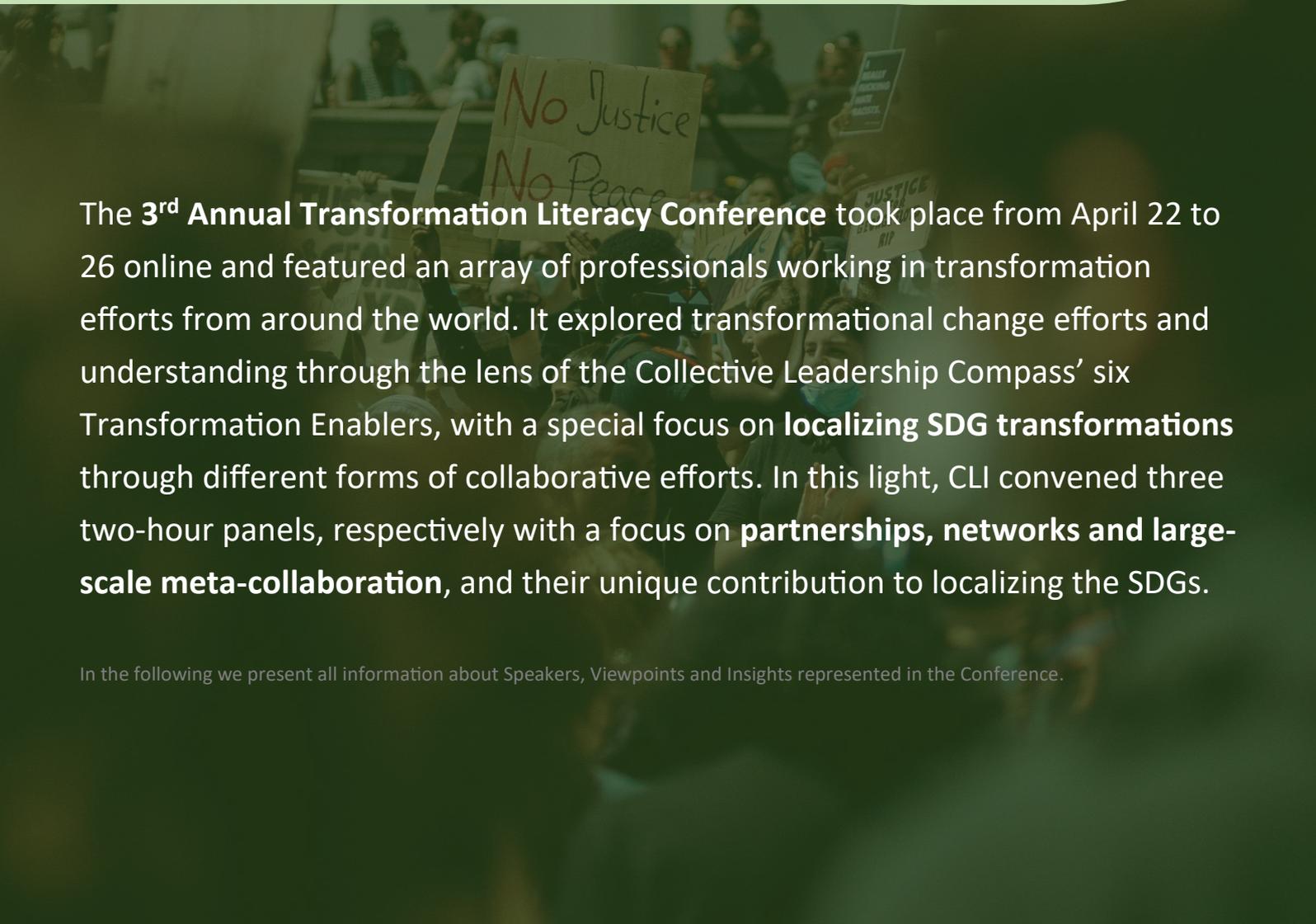Report
Transformation Literacy Conference 2024

"Localizing SDG Transformations"

The **3ʳᵈ Annual Transformation Literacy Conference** took place from April 22 to 26 online and featured an array of professionals working in transformation efforts from around the world. It explored transformational change efforts and understanding through the lens of the Collective Leadership Compass' six Transformation Enablers, with a special focus on **localizing SDG transformations** through different forms of collaborative efforts. In this light, CLI convened three two-hour panels, respectively with a focus on **partnerships, networks and large-scale meta-collaboration,** and their unique contribution to localizing the SDGs.

In the following we present all information about Speakers, Viewpoints and Insights represented in the Conference.

Day One

Convened two speakers leading national and regional transformation efforts for sustainability in ambitious multi-stakeholder partnerships, each facing the challenge to break down a wide-reaching initiative to diverse local communities involved and create impact.

Absa Mboji

MSP on Agroecology Officer at Enda Pronat

"Are national and local partnership networks contributing to sustainable development in West Africa? Perspective of DyTAES experience in Senegal."

Gina Bonne

CEO Chargée de mission, Head, Department of Environment and Climate Change Indian Ocean Commission Republic of Mauritius

"Regional cooperation among a diversity of actors in the Western Indian Ocean."

Ten people celebrating TLC 2024 together, organized by the University of Konstanz, Germany.

Day Two

Focused on exploring the emerging trend of Communities of Practice and Learning Networks, and the distinct contributions they can make to localizing SDG efforts. Our speakers shared global, thematic and locally focused network experiences.

Any Sulistyowati

Founder Perkumpulan Kuncup Padang Ilalang (KAIL)

"Rumah KAIL: A center for experiencing sustainability practices and applying systems thinking for community transformations across Indonesia"

Dr. Zodwa Dlamini

Founding Network Leadership Council Member at Women in Water Diplomacy Network

"A community for enhancing the collective capacity and genuine involvement of women water leaders in decision making and peacebuilding processes in transboundary

ErnstJan Stroes

Programme Manager Connect for Global Change at Wilde Ganzen and Secretary at European Network for Citizen Initiatives in Global Solidarity.

"A peer learning community for supporting organized citizen engagement in Europe that helps enhance local sustainability transformations in the Global South"

Day Three

Convened three speakers leading uniquely challenging meta-collaboration efforts, an equally emerging trend as a response to the climate crisis. Insights were brought from collaborations across regions, countries, and continents.

Batriz Waldmann

Project Manager at NABU Germany (Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union)

"MSP as a tool for Meta-collaboration: the case of the Lake Tana Stakeholders Alliance, Ethiopia"

Daniela Bolivar

Communication and Marketing Consultant for Organizations with mandates in Entrepreneurship & Impact Investment, *Bolivia*

"Building Bonds: Strategic Communication as the Key to Intertwining Latin American Social Entrepreneurship Ecosystems"

Jiska Gojowczyk

Project Coordinator at SÜDWIND-Institute, *Germany*
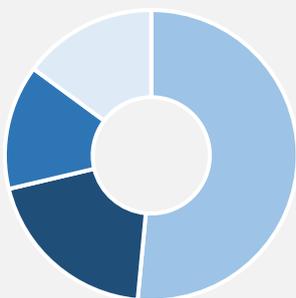
"Reaching G*OSH through transnational dialogue"

G*OSH = Gender transformative approach to occupational safety and health

Thirteen people celebrating TLC 2024 together, organized by the Collective Leadership Hub in Kiev.
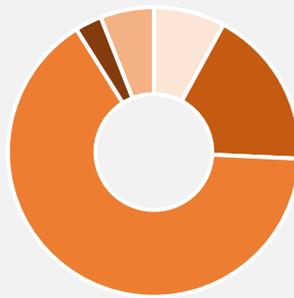
Our participants

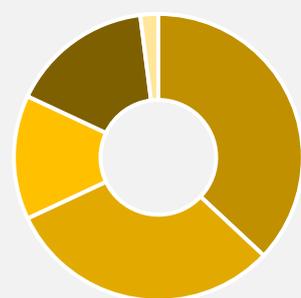### Sectors of participants

- Civil Society
- Private Sector
- Public Sector
- Research & Education

Professional level of participants

- Executives, Management, Directors
- Middle-Management, Project Coordinators
- Staff, Consultants
- Students, Trainees, Interns
- Not disclosed

Regional distribution

- Europe
- Americas
- Oceania
- Africa
- Asia

In total 80 countries were represented.

The Collective Leadership Compass' **Transformation Enablers** (see below), serve as the guidance for the conference. A mutually supportive set of six conceptual frames, they allow for a systemic perspective to foster transformative change.

This year, we explored how other Compass lenses specific for **networks, partnerships and meta-collaboration** contribute to this larger conceptual frame, and how we can practically, locally, bring forward added value to the larger sustainability goals.
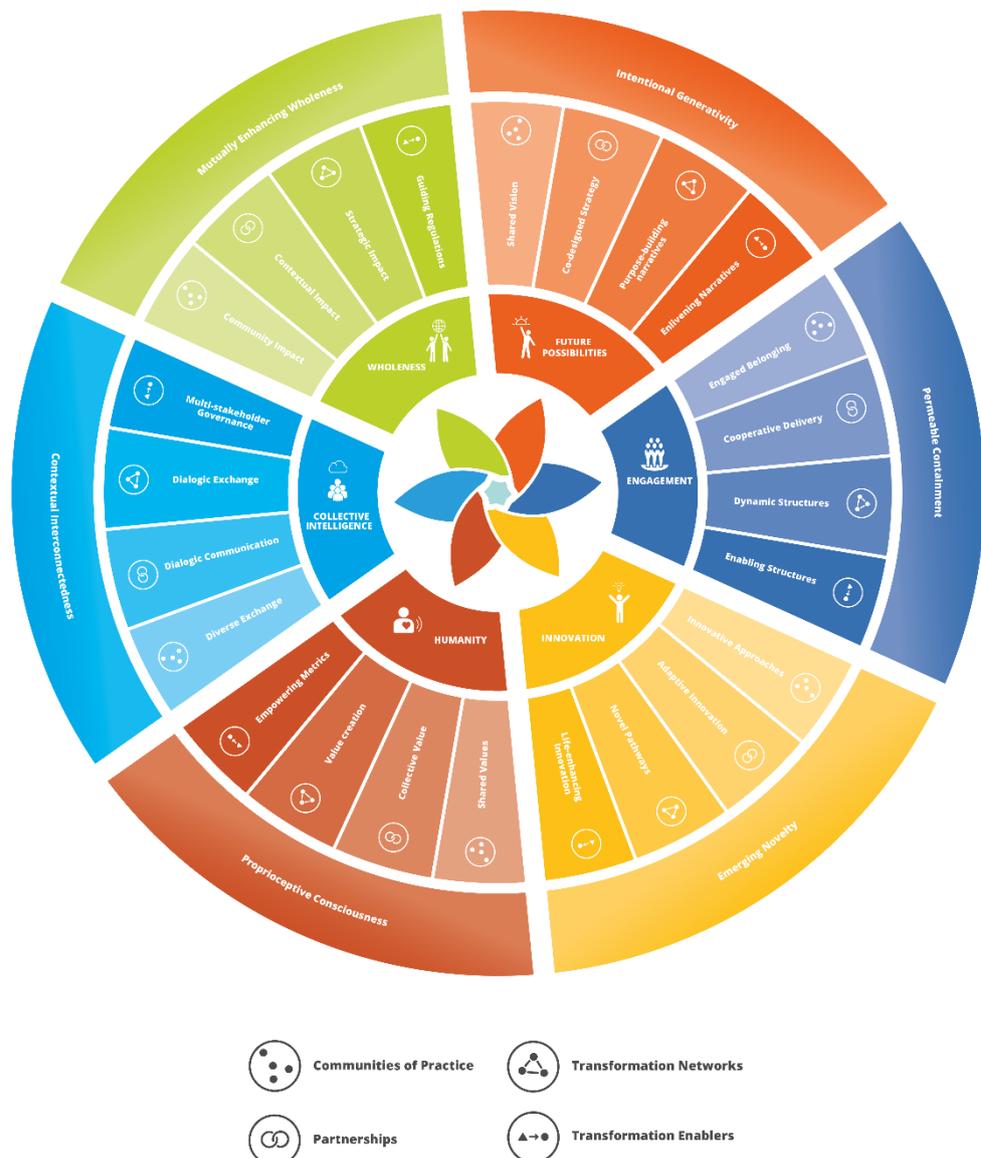
Why Transformation Literacy?

Transformation literacy is the capacity to collectively identify patterns of societal and human-to-nature interactions, and actively shift and steward them. The objective is to increase aliveness and vitality in these systems to lead to transformative outcomes.

We consider transformation literacy as a collective practice or a set of skills that manifests on three levels:

1. Self: The individual mindset and the mindset of people in a collaboration system.
2. Systems: Understanding system patterns.
3. Process: Designing and implementing transformative action

Transformation literacy fosters the ability of multiple actors, from the local to the global level, to radically change the way they operate. It helps us shift paradigms, create new narratives, see interconnectedness, and capitalize on it: It helps us envision multiple thriving and regenerative futures, foster a sense of universal responsibility for all living beings, and perceive how systemic transformations can happen.

The first session of the 2024 Transformation Literacy Conference focused on localizing SDGs through **multi-actor partnerships and initiatives**.

Collaborative initiatives and partnerships are a form of cooperation that includes a certain level of formality, i.e. some kind of official agreements, with goals and results that are not only jointly defined but implemented together. In most cases, this also means some degree of a separate management and coordination structure set up, such as project secretariats, and of course participation form multiple societal sectors – public, private, civil society, academia and others.

The Compass lens to bring out transformative change in such initiatives are the **Collaboration Catalysts**. They translate the large, conceptual guidance of the Transformation Enablers to the practical case of a multi-stakeholder partnership. In brief, the six elements of guidance here are:

- **Co-designed Strategy**: All relevant stakeholders are driving strategy and implementation in partnerships.
- **Cooperative Delivery**: Ownership and result orientation are ensured through high-quality stakeholder engagement processes.
- **Adaptive innovation**: Transformation prototypes are co-created in agile planning and attention is paid to different kinds of expertise building.
- **Collective Value**: Added and shared value is created for all stakeholders through a balanced influence and integration of stakeholders
- **Dialogic Communication**: Communication architectures acknowledge diversity and create cohesion and learning.
- **Contextual Impact**: The envisaged change has relevance for the stakeholder system and is embedded in larger transformations.
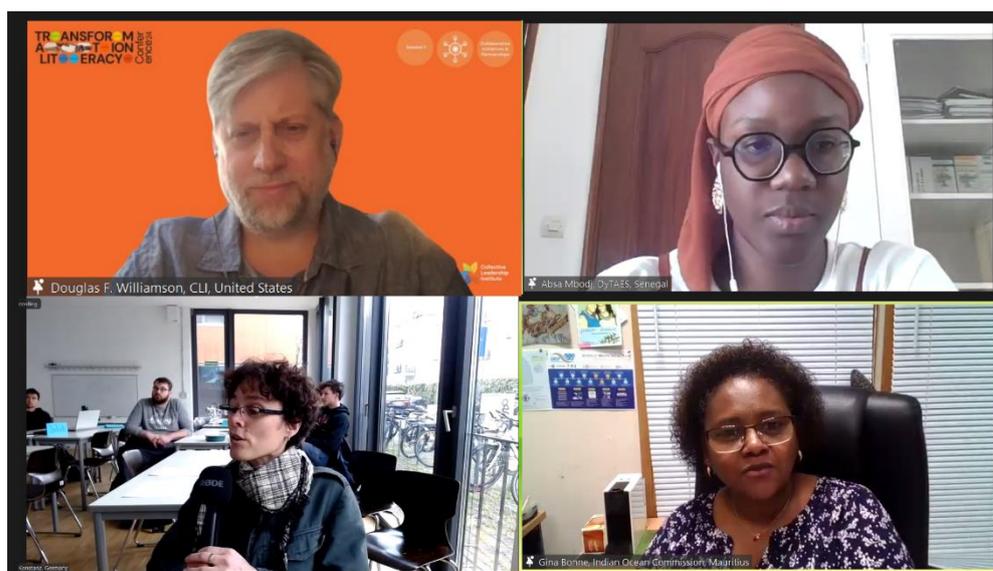
Here are some of the highlights from speakers on Day 1 of the 2024 TLC related to partnerships and initiatives:

Absa Mbodi: Our Dynamic for **National Agroecological Transition in Senegal** is a countrywide multi-stakeholder partnership, created in 2019 with currently 78 members. Agroecology is gaining momentum as a response to challenges of climate change, land degradation and dependence on external input in the agriculture sector. The partnership's vision is to achieve food security and sovereignty through agroecology, blending local traditional agriculture with indigenous knowledge and science, in alignment with the FAO's principles of agroecology. Principles in this partnership have been a focus on **complementarity** among diverse actors, **autonomy of action**

> "Subnational multi-stakeholder partnerships localize action within Senegal …. they create synergies among actors, scale up local initiatives and engage in community outreach [and] awareness raising. "

and free expression among the local subset of actors, and **horizontal relationships** that foster common ground. Dialogues with local political representatives and other actors allows the local partnerships to produce evidence-based data to support the national advocacy. The local initiatives influence the national political dialogue, ensuring that **advocacy reflects diverse regional problems**.

Among its successes achieved since its creation, this partnership has led to a **government decision** in 2021 **to subsidize organic fertilizers** with up to 10% of the national budget for chemical fertilizers.

Gina: The **Indian Ocean Commission** (IOC) aims to promote cooperation on education for sustainability among its 25 members states, among them Mauritius, Madagascar, Seychelles and the Comoros islands. The initiative started with a pilot program on education for the environment, that transitioned onto partnerships with governments, institutions, schools, NGOs, and the International Federation for Environmental Education (FEE), **leveraging existing capacities and resources**. Notably, former students now occupy key positions in government and

> "…We involved communities through NGOs and schools, recognizing the importance of changing perspectives at the grassroots level. … We… engaged over 21,000 students, and integrated education into all IOC programs. …"

international organizations, advocating for environmental causes. **The journey from pilot programs to widespread education initiatives** demonstrates the **transformative power of education** in fostering sustainable development. The initiative empowered communities, nurtured environmental stewardship, and cultivated a new generation of leaders committed to preserving our planet.

We invited our attendees to a joint reflection: What made these partnerships a success in localizing the SDG's?

For Absa's case: Are national and local partnership networks contributing to sustainable development in West Africa? Perspective of DyTAES experience in Senegal.

- **Co-designed strategy** is very strong because of the clear and specific vision; the idea to use local storytelling as well was shared
- **Contextual Impact** is clear because of the connections between the partnerships at the national and local level.
- Both **Adaptive Innovation** and **Dialogic Communication** are very present, e.g. through innovative met-up formats with communities and horizontal relationships

For Gina's case: Regional cooperation among a diversity of actors in the western Indian Ocean

- The axis between **Dialogic Communication and Cooperative Delivery** is strong: the huge diversity of the islands and the stakeholders engaged required attention on how to embrace this diversity
- **Cooperative Delivery** was enhanced by commitments and partnership agreements and also engagement materials that were developed.
- **Co-designed Strategy** was developed in both top-down and bottom-up approaches,
- For **Adaptive Innovation**, an iterative approach was practiced: Different ages of kids and classes were directly engaged in the reflection of useful material for education

Day 2 of the 2024 Transformation Literacy Conference was dedicated to looking at the contribution of **learning networks and communities of practice** to localizing SDGs.

Peer learning networks bring people together around a shared topic of interest, often also with a specific learning goal in mind. **Communities of Practice** go even further: Following the definition by Beverly Wenger-Trayner, in addition to this shared interest they have a community marked by relationships and mutual support, and they engage in a regular practice that means e.g. sharing a collection of resources.

The Compass lens to bring out their contributions to sustainability transformation are the **Community Catalysts**. They translate the large, conceptual guidance of the Transformation Enablers to the reality of learning networks and communities of practice. The six elements of guidance here are:

- **Shared Vision**: Members contribute to a shared community purpose.
- **Engaged Belonging:** Members create a sense of togetherness through joint events and processes.
- **Innovative Approaches**: Members forge new pathways in creative spaces and nurturing excellence in their practice.
- **Shared Values**: Members live their values by nurturing authentic relationships in the network or community.
- **Diverse Exchange**: Members foster a culture of dialogic inquiry in learning towards diversity, learning and transparency.
- **Community Impact**: Members enhance capacity for impact by supporting each other to lead sustainability efforts.
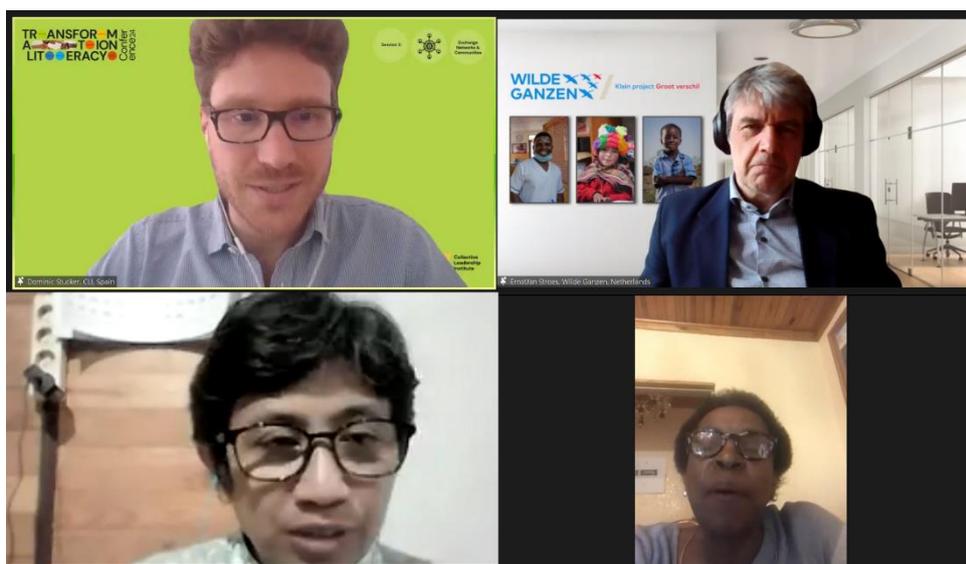
Here are some of the highlights from the Day 2 speakers of the 2024 TLC related to peer learning networks and Communities of Practice:

Any: The **Rumah Learning Center** in Indonesia provides a space to experience, practice and apply systems thinking for sustainable community transformations. The space itself is built on the Permaculture principles and has been created as part of the community engagement and learning process. As **a physical space**, it offers an opportunity for members of the adjoining communities to learn about different sustainable living practices **anchored in local resources and needs.** A crucial impact of this approach has been to offer a direct experience of sustainable living, and to **render the concept of sustainability tangible** and real for people in the surrounding

> "We involve many other community members such as children, youth, and they are also working with us to build something, and through building something together, they can have the skills that they can also apply in their home or in their community. … "

communities – where it used to be seen as an abstract concept for urban areas.

Zodwa: The **Water Women Diplomacy Network** was initiated in response to the fragility of peace processes in the Nile basin area. It has expanded since then to other areas where transboundary water management is hampered by fragile peace and is anchored in the belief that **questions of gender and peace are intricately**

linked, and the genuine involvement of **women water leaders in decision-making and in those peace processes is crucial** to achieve both lasting peace and sustainable water management. Strategies include gender and youth empowerment, peer-to-peer learning, research cooperation, linkages to water basins and process support on strategies or monitoring and evaluation.

> "…One of the most important things is that when we look at the community of practice, it provides a safe haven for everyone. Members communicate, collectively identify work opportunities… "

E...e **European Network for Citizen Initiatives in**

> "…maintaining shared values and vision amidst changing contexts remains crucial for our international network … "

Global Solidarity aims to express global solidarity with those affected by climate change or conflict, fostering networks across Europe and the United States. The work involves **enabling and supporting citizen initiatives**, fostering capacity building, and promoting networking among them. These initiatives often partner with organizations in the global South. Ultimately, **the goal is community impact**, supporting initiatives that build infrastructure like water reservoirs in areas with water scarcity in the global South, while **fostering global solidarity and public involvement**.

We invited our attendees to a joint reflection: How were these communities and networks successful in contributing to localizing SDG transformation?

For Any's case: Setting up a center to facilitate sharing and learning among individuals and organizations

- **Shared Values** is strong as people come organically to the initiative, without comprehensive funding, as people perceive a clear added value here
- **Engaged belonging** is also pronounced; the network managed to bring people from the local community on board who co-created and maintained the space.
- **Shared Purpose:** The idea that sustainable living is not for the wealthy few, but accessible to all has a potential to expand to other places and so scale the localizing impact of the network

For Zodwa's case: The Water Women Diplomacy Network

- Balanced pattern of all elements, what stands out is bringing together peace, gender and water issues as a strong **Innovative Approach**
- **Engaged Belonging** is also strong through the focus on a safe space for women professionals
- **Shared values** performed also well through the active practice on respect of the expertise, knowledge and experience of all

For Ernst-Jan's case: The European Network for Citizen Initiatives in Global Solidarity

- Also a balanced pattern of all elements; as clear starting aspect emerged **Shared Values** around a strong identity of the network purpose of global solidarity
- This allows for a strong **Community Impact** with mutual support practiced among the members to improve sharing expertise and information for transformation efforts and live this solidarity

- **Innovative Approaches** shows up also strongly, as all members support each other well to find creative solutions and innovative ideas to deal with challenges

Day 3 of the TLC looked at **meta-level collaboration and transformation networks** that bringing together collaborations in different parts of the world

Transformation networks and other **meta-collaborations** bring together other cooperative forms, like learning networks and partnerships. This can be either around a joint topic or a particular SDG, bring together all transformation efforts on this topic in a particular region or country. Alternatively, they can also form around a region or area first, and then bring in the variety of sustainability efforts ongoing in that region around a common goal. These kinds of meta-connections are uniquely complex, but also bear an enormous potential for creating new ways of thinking, being, and finding solutions together.

The Compass lens to bring out transformative change in such large-scale efforts are the **Network Enablers**. They connect the large, conceptual guidance of the Transformation Enablers to the these similarly large-scale efforts. The six elements of guidance here are:

- **Purpose-building Narratives**: All network members align around a purpose and contribute to the network's impact strategy.
- **Dynamic Structures**: Self-organization around common interests ensures ownership for change and high levels of engagement.
- **Novel pathways**: Transformation prototypes are co-created in agile planning and attention is paid to different kinds of expertise building.
- **Value Creation**: Members of the network mutually acknowledge each other's experience and expertise.
- **Dialogic Exchange**: Communication and exchanges leverage diversity and create cohesion in the network.
- **Contextual Impact**: Relevance of the network purpose and impact strategy is embedded in larger transformations.

Here are some of the highlights from the Day 3 speakers of the 2024 TLC related to meta-collaborations and transformation networks:

Beatriz: **The Lake Tana Stakeholders Alliance in Ethiopia** is a meta-collaboration providing an umbrella for partnerships, working groups and other organizations surrounding the Lake Tana. Designated a **UNESCO Biosphere Reserve** in 2025, this area is inhabited by **2.5 million people**, whose livelihood depends on the ecosystem that the lake provides. Population growth, poverty, and waste management issues are, among other challenges, threatening this ecosystem. The alliance has the goal of **restoring this ecosystem** and is unique for setting up a parallel structure to the government in the region. Through **diverse activities** ranging from **circular economy** approaches to sustainable **reforestation**, it connects grassroot activists and high-level decision-makers and embeds it with initiatives in other regions as well as the national level. Each distinct thematic working group connects to all the **different elements of its governance structure** and thus allows synthesis and complementarity.

"…this meta-collaboration contributes to bringing those small activities into a much bigger regional and local perspective…the connection … promotes a lot of opportunities,.. [e.g.] resource mobilization, upscaling in different regions, diverse expertise, risk sharing, and mitigation… "

Jiska: The project for **better gender transformative occupational health and safety in the Garment and Footwear Industry** brings together dialogue and collaborative action in **Indonesia, India and Germany.** Set up in 2021, the objective is to improve the health of workers in the garment and footwear industry, especially women and other marginalized groups, which make up a majority of the workforce. It creates knowledge in gender-specific health risks, develops health and safety guidelines and implements them as pilots in factories. **Regional core groups** bring together gender and health experts, grassroot organizations and, crucially, the business side.

They are complemented by **transnational dialogues** involving

"…We invest a lot of organizational resources in making this happen. It sounds simple and obvious, but just ensuring translation and convening in three languages…it requires a lot of patience and really also learning from everyone. … "

fashion brands, retailers, and international organizations. A common vision for change in the industry was co-created and, most importantly, **spaces across country contexts** that helped to **overcome boundaries of perspectives, voices and understanding**. This is the crucial basis to move to remaining issues, such as changing the purchasing practices of brands as well as regulatory changes in the consumption countries in Europe.

Daniela: **Strategic Communication in the Latin American Social Entrepreneurship Ecosystem** was set up with the goal to increase impact and capitalize on existing resources for social entrepreneurs. Social entrepreneurship needs to be understood and approached differently in the Latin American context than in Western or developed countries. Since the economic structure and culture is different, **defining the 'social' in entrepreneurship** and dealing with concepts like inclusive markets and market-based solutions need to be adapted to work. This network brings together different social entrepreneurship projects across the continent to contextualize those concepts and **align their actions to increase the impact** of their work e.g. by embedding impact practices into the more traditional entrepreneurial support organizations.

"...A 'communication process' is the same as writing the score of a song... you need to build relationship and trust... and you need to build aliveness ...

We invited our attendees to a joint reflection: How did these meta-collaborations succeed in localizing SDG's?

For Beatriz' case: MSP as a tool for meta-collaboration: The case of the Lake Tana Stakeholders Alliance, Ethiopia

- Balanced pattern of all elements, **a good equilibrium**; every Network Enabler had space in this project
- **Dynamic Structures** stands out with engagement of a high diversity and quantity of stakeholders in a structured way, supported by detailed but effective governance structures in **Dialogic Exchange**
- **Novel Pathways** is prominent with innovative actions and pilots that cover a diverse range of topics, which supports **Value creation** by adding value for this diversity of stakeholders
- **Contextual Impact** is assured, since local activities are embedded in a larger picture and the project is replicable, and **Purpose Building Narratives** is very clear with its focus on sustainable livelihoods

For Jiska's case: Reaching G*OSH through transnational dialogue

- **Dynamic Structures** was present with a strong bottom-up process, which allowed in **Dialogic Exchange** to create effective spaces for understanding context and challenges, and listening to previously excluded voices, albeit with significant resource investment
- **Purpose-building Narratives** was strengthened through the joint vision and story for change; and the process of its co-creation itself strengthened the shared **Value Creation** among stakeholders
- **Contextual Impact** still needs attention and is the focus of the ongoing process now

For Daniela's case: Strategic Communication as the key to intertwining Latin American Social Entrepreneurship Ecosystems

- Clear strengths were in **Purpose-Building narratives** with a clarity on how contributions lead to impact, as well as **Value Creation** that appreciation for the Latin American economic context is needed, e.g. appreciating the value of the informal economy
- **Novel Pathways** came out as structural innovation in the network, and **Contextual Impact** was clear with activities and contribution of the members and localizing experiences among different countries

Localizing the SDGs is a lot of translation, adaptation and connection work, done very differently across the world and in diverse forms of working together.

The Global Goals are a global ambition, but they need contributions on all levels of society. Localizing the SDGs means giving our actions context: How does my neighborhood initiative contribute? How can we break down a regional project to the realities of all people it concerns?

This Conference has shown us how this can become a reality. We have seen how multi-actor partnerships can localize their action, through a strong focus on combining top-down and bottom-up processes in parallel, as illustrated in Senegal, and through cycles of innovative learning and piloting education and advocacy, as seen in the Western Indian Ocean.

Learning networks and Communities of Practice are becoming more popular, often in response to a renewed need to support and learn from each other. We have seen how they can foster

the all-important focus on impact and contribution, as in the European Network for Citizen Initiatives in Global Solidarity. The Water Women Diplomacy Network allows for crucial synergies between the SDGs on peace, water management and gender, while the Rumah Learning Center in Indonesia gives sustainability meaning through a physical space.

Large meta-collaborations are another response to the urgency of sustainability transformation. They arguably face challenges in localization given their sheer size. And yet we have seen how this, too, is possible: Through a multitude of local actions on diverse topics and investing in a highly

inclusive governance structure, as seen around the Lake Tana in Ethiopia. The case in Latin America reminded us of the importance of contextualizing seemingly universal concepts like social entrepreneurship, while occupational health and safety in Indonesia and India showed the power of spaces for the voices of marginalized stakeholders.

Localizing the SDGs is possible in a many ways depending on what we engage in – partnerships, communities of practice or meta-collaborations. What we need is continuous learning and inspiration that respects the unique attributes and opportunities of our various ways of collaboration....

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