

Transforming Education for Sustainable Futures: Call for Research Proposals

Call overview

About TESF

The Transforming Education for Sustainable Futures (TESF) Network Plus is a research network under the UK Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF). The aim of TESF is to generate new knowledge and build capacities via interdisciplinary research across institutions, non-governmental and community-based organisations to envision and implement education policies and research practices that can contribute to equitable, socially just and environmentally sustainable futures with specific focus on:

- Knowledge, skills and agency of young people and adults via equitable quality education;
- Sustainable cities, livelihoods and communities;
- Climate action.

TESF Network Plus works on co-production of research, aimed at meeting the needs of historically marginalised groups, including those most affected by poverty, women, youth, indigenous peoples, urban and rural communities.

Aim of the call

The background paper that identifies critical challenges concerning the education system in India and the extent to which they currently support sustainable futures, particularly in creating and sustaining equitable and socially just societies; sustainable livelihoods (i.e. livelihoods that provide an income sufficient to maintain themselves and their families and that do not cause damage to the environment), equitable and environmentally sustainable cities and communities and climate action is [here](#).

The overarching research questions, through this call, are as follows:

- How can liberal and professional education assist learners to achieve sustainable livelihoods? What kinds of skills, knowledges, capacities and attitudes are required by learners for them to achieve sustainable livelihoods? How can education support the agency of learners to achieve sustainable livelihoods?
- How can liberal and professional education support sustainable cities, communities and socially just societies? What capacities, knowledges, sensibilities, skills, and dispositions are required by urban communities, planners, politicians and community leaders to support environmentally and socially just and sustainable cities? How can the location, planning, design and operation of educational institutions contribute to environmentally and socially just, sustainable cities and communities?
- How can education contribute to climate action? What capacities, knowledges, sensibilities, skills, and dispositions do learners need to mitigate climate change and/or adapt to its effects? How can formal and informal education mobilise capacity, individual and collective agency for tackling the effects of climate change?

IIHS is inviting expressions of interest from Early Career Researchers (ECRs) based in India, who are interested in developing proposals for projects that can assist us in meeting the objectives listed above. ECRs interested in participating in this process will be invited to develop their ideas into full proposals and will be supported in this process through regular feedback and specially convened workshops. These will be delivered virtually if it is not possible to meet face-to-face. ECRs interested in participating in this process would require to submit an expression of interest in a standard template. Proposals will be subject to a round of review and feedback before selection decisions are finalised.

We anticipate around 11 funded research projects of not more than INR 10,00,000 each. The duration of the projects will be for a maximum of 12 months. Successful proposals are expected to commence in October 2021 and must be completed by end of September 2022.

Research challenge

As the background paper on India points out, the country is profoundly affected by a range of sustainability challenges, although these are manifested differently. These include but are not limited to high levels of poverty and inequality including inequality linked to socio-economic status, gender, caste and indigeneity; dependency on low-paid and precarious employment in the formal and informal sectors; high levels of unemployment; rapid processes of urbanisation with shifting patterns of movement and settlement between urban and rural areas; overcrowding and sub-standard accommodation, poor infrastructure including sanitation, spatial planning and services, natural disasters and food insecurity; vulnerability to the effects of climate change including increased risks of flooding and drought; periods of protracted conflict.

Although education and training are accorded a high priority within national and regional policy agendas, there remains limited and highly unequal access to good quality education and lifelong learning opportunities. There are consistent concerns about the relevance of curricula for addressing the sustainability challenges identified above. Social and educational inequalities have been exacerbated by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, new ideas and practices are emerging both in formal education and training settings as well as in non-governmental and community-based organisations and businesses. These have the potential to challenge unsustainable policy and practices. To respond to the challenges facing education, training and wider forms of social learning, there is a need to identify and build on these initiatives and to mobilise capacity to realise transformative change. It requires being able to potentially draw on different kinds of expertise including expertise held by academics, educational practitioners, policy makers as well as those within non-governmental and community-based organisations. It also potentially requires being able to draw on insights from different academic disciplines as well as from indigenous and local knowledge of tackling sustainability challenges.

Research questions

In the context of India, the key questions/themes that form the basis of this call and across key categories of School, Higher and Teacher education; Climate Action and Sustainable Cities, are identified below:

School, Higher and Teacher Education

- Identifying major conceptual shifts in the meanings and purposes of education and developing a critical understanding what is meant by quality education.

- Problematising educational practice and arrangements to understand how social, gender, economic, environmental and epistemic injustice is sustained and perpetuated; and how educational inequality impedes the realisation of the full potential of education in enabling socially and environmentally sustainable societies.
- Problematising the dominant discourse and construct of 'learning crisis' to examine how different kinds of inequalities, such as, class, caste, race, ethnicity, gender, disability, and educational inequality impact the development of disadvantaged learners and their learning outcomes.
- Examining spatial inequality in school, teacher and higher education and its relationship with education for sustainable development.
- Exploring how linkages between school and higher education can be forged with knowledges and pedagogies of economic, social and environmental sustainability, via teacher education.
- Exploring how school, higher and professional education, including teacher education can be transformed to develop critical knowledges, capacities and teacher and student agency towards developing a socially and environmentally sustainable and just society.

Climate Action

- Examining linkages between sustainable development, disaster risk reduction and climate action, at national, state and regional levels; and key actors and system transitions that are relevant to the Indian and global development agendas.
- Exploring the potential for climate change education to address questions of societal transitions and to build an epistemic and practice-based bridge between addressing the challenges of environmental, social and economic justice.
- Exploring the potential to join up local and indigenous knowledges on climate adaptation with sustainability, urban and climate science, and operationalise that in teaching-learning environments.
- Mapping gaps in capacity and knowledge of teacher educators, practitioners, mentors and students (at various levels) on climate change education and ESD; and defining appropriate strategies and mechanisms to address them. This includes building on practice-based repositories of knowledge, curricular framing and critical pedagogic strategies.

Sustainable Cities

- Extending SDG localisation from SDG11 to the other SDGs, and sites of knowledge creation/co-creation around them.
- Exploring how to address intersecting urban vulnerabilities in the context of the SDGs, specifically the linkage between spatial, social and environmental justice.
- Exploring post-COVID urban futures in the context of sustainable cities and communities and equitable education for sustainable development.
- Examining critical learning and pedagogy in interdisciplinary programmes of teacher education and their link with sustainable urbanisation in India
- Exploring methods of wider public engagement and social learning around questions of social and gender justice and urban sustainability, using performing and fine arts and blended learning modes.
- Exploring how education on sustainable cities and communities can be integrated into teacher education programmes in India

Key Highlights of Projects

These projects are expected to have the following salient features:

- innovative and/or exploratory in nature and that are able to build creatively on opportunities for positive change;
- contribute to mobilising capacity in the area of education for sustainable development and include researchers at early stages in their careers who may be potentially based in academic and non-academic settings;
- can contribute positively towards environmental sustainability and in identifying and overcoming inequalities in education and wider society including those based on socio-economic status, caste, gender, race, ethnicity, language, disability etc.;
- have the potential to impact and transform existing policy and practice (for example, through designing and implementing new policies, processes of teaching, learning and assessment, resources, professional development opportunities and ways of working together);
- are 'co-created', between academic and non-academic stakeholders, i.e. that bring different academic and non-academic stakeholders together to tackle real world problems;
- bring together insights and perspectives that may be derived from different academic disciplines as well as from local and indigenous knowledge;
- are able to communicate in an accessible way the findings of research to relevant audiences. We encourage a wide range of outputs to be developed, including standard written output but also those outside traditional academia including teaching and learning materials, digital, arts based and other resources such as policy papers.

Eligibility

Early Career Researcher (ECR)

This call for proposals is meant for early career researchers (ECRs), who are located in academic or non-academic settings. An ECR for this activity is someone who has completed his/her PhD and has not more than 10 years of post-qualification academic experience or alternatively, a practitioner who is engaged in a non-academic setting post last academic qualification. An ECR would need to demonstrate work, academic or practice, in the domain of either education, or education for climate action or education for sustainable cities. These include individuals who have worked across local communities or with education stakeholders, on questions of equality, diversity and inclusion.

What kinds of activities are eligible?

Any research related activity as per the features mentioned above, including for communicating the findings of research. Activities that are not eligible include:

- Activities that do not contain an element of new research
- Fees for individuals to undertake university undergraduate, postgraduate or research/PhD programmes/degrees/courses
- Any application where equipment forms over 10% of the total budget

Application process and timeline

The application process involves the following steps:

- Applicants submit an expression of interest form
- Expressions of interest is evaluated by an expert panel
- Applicants who submitted successful expressions of interest are invited to develop a full proposal, along with submitting relevant undertakings as part of due diligence
- Applicants developing full proposals invited to a proposal development workshop
- Applicants submit full proposals incorporating feedback from the expert review process, along with submitting relevant undertakings as part of due diligence
- Final proposals confirmed or rejected
- Contracts issued
- All projects commence from October 2021

Guidelines for submitting an expression of interest

ECRs interested in submitting a proposal must first complete an expression of interest (Eoi). The relevant Eoi form (Microsoft Word template) can be downloaded from the TESI India website. The completed Eoi must be submitted to the email address and by the deadline published on the website. If you have trouble accessing or using the form, please email us at tesf@iihs.ac.in.

Guidelines for developing full proposals

If your expression of interest is accepted, you will be invited to develop a full proposal. In addition to the elements identified above this must also include the following:

Case for support

The case for support for your research, with a 5,000 word limit; should include, but is not limited to:

- A description of your aims; how they fulfill the objectives mentioned in earlier sections and research context in which you are working. We would like to know the problems you intend to address and issues you will explore. You should also address the context of this research, looking at why it is important, to research in this area and the contribution you will be making to this
- The methods you will use to address the questions, including why you have chosen these. This is also where you would include any creative aspect of your research and any new processes that you will be developing
- Project management, including the multidisciplinary aspects of your research, co-production, time on the project, timetables and milestones, risk assessments
- Ethics and permits to include any ethical implications of your research (such as involving human participants and relation to the environment) as applicable. Give brief details of these and how you will address them
- The kinds of outputs that you intend to produce, how you will maximise these, and how we will be able to share these on our website

Budget justification

Your budget justification should cover the following (750 words)

- Explain why the indicated resources are needed, taking into account the nature and complexity of the project

What supporting documents will you need?

Budget form

When applying, you will need to submit a fully itemised budget. The Excel budget template can be downloaded from our website. The budget must be in line with our guidance on eligible budget.

Should your application be successful, information on financial and narrative reporting will be provided in the award letter. This will include an itemised financial report, supported by invoices and receipts.

Visual evidence

You may submit up to two sides of A4 as visual evidence in support of your application. This can include images, graphs and tables and should be submitted as a word/PDF document. This is not compulsory.

Letter of recommendation

A letter of recommendation from someone who has good knowledge of applicant's work would be required. These would need to be, as the case may be, emailed to tesf@iihs.ac.in.

Assessment process and criteria

Applications will undergo an expert peer review undertaken by an impartial assessment panel put together by IIHS. The assessment panel may include potential users of research such as representatives of relevant policy makers, businesses, non-governmental and community organisations. Standard principles of review will apply with regard to confidentiality and conflicts of interest. The awards will be made to a balanced portfolio across the research themes. IIHS constituted expert panel retain absolute discretion on which expressions of interest to take forward and which research projects to fund. Not all applications will be successful and we reserve the right to not fund projects. At the full proposal stage, applications will be reviewed under the following headings:

Relevance

Does the proposal contain clearly defined aims and research questions? How relevant is the proposal for addressing TEF objectives? How relevant is the proposal for meeting the sustainability challenges as set out in the relevant country background paper? Will the proposed research provide new knowledge?

Expertise

What kinds of expertise does the researcher possess? How relevant is this expertise for tackling the research questions identified in the proposal?

Capacity mobilisation

How will the proposed research contribute to mobilising capacity in the area of education for sustainable development? How clearly are the plans for mobilising capacity explained?

Appropriateness of research methods

How appropriate are the proposed research methods for addressing the research questions? How practical are the proposed methods? Does the researcher possess the necessary methodological expertise to undertake the research?

Research impact

What is the potential of the research for facilitating transformative change to one or more areas of education policy or practice beyond the projects end date? How will the research benefit historically disadvantaged/ marginalised groups? What evidence is there that the intended beneficiaries of the research have been actively involved in the conceptualisation and design of research proposal and involved in the research process itself? How robust are plans for disseminating/ communicating research findings in a way that is accessible to intended beneficiaries?

Management

How feasible and appropriate are project timescales, plans and reviewing milestones? What evidence is there of the ability of the researcher to deliver the project and outputs? Has the applicant provided relevant undertakings as part of due diligence?

Appropriate use of resources

Including appropriateness of the resources requested to complete the proposal, understanding of the project requirements.

Checklist

When completing a full application, please ensure you have:

- ✓ Completed all questions
- ✓ Included a CV
- ✓ A completed budget form, downloaded from our website
- ✓ Visual evidence, a maximum of two sides of A4 (not compulsory)
- ✓ A completed letter of recommendation

Scheme requirements and post awarding

IIHS will require full reports from all projects. This may include data gathered through the application process. Outputs from commissioned projects will form part of the reporting. You will need to include information about the type of output that you plan to produce in your application. IIHS encourages the production of a wide range of outputs, including those outside of traditional academia.

All successful projects will be required to provide regular updates that will be reviewed by IIHS. These will feed into the network's activities and research, including training events and knowledge exchanges.

Projects should consider some key indicators that they may use to measure success. These could include, but are not limited to, numbers of participants to events, reach achieved, changes in organisational behaviour, questionnaire data from participants or case studies.