

Advance paper submitted to the
IPCC Expert Meeting on Communication, Oslo, Norway, 9-10 February 2016

What did we learn from supporting the AR5 outreach events in Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa and Uganda?

By Simbisai Zhanje, Project Manager on the Climate and Development Knowledge Africa programme. SouthSouthNorth a non-profit organisation based in Cape Town, South Africa is an alliance partner of CDKN and hosts the Africa programme.

Background

In 2013, the [Climate and Development Knowledge Network \(CDKN\)](#) was commissioned by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) to communicate the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) to policy makers, the private sector, researchers and civil society in developing countries. The outreach events co-hosted by the national governments and the IPCC, took place in six countries – Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan between July and September 2014¹. In addition CDKN co-hosted a regional event in South Africa, with the Department of Environmental Affairs and the IPCC in November 2014. This advanced paper focuses on the lessons learnt from the Africa outreach events.

The outreach events were a combination of policy dialogue events, journalist trainings and dialogues with young scientists. The events brought national decision-makers, the business community, civil society and academia face-to-face with IPCC scientists, providing a space for debate on the implications of the climate science for their country and what the responses should be.

CDKN produced the following derivative products to support the outreach events:

- Three regional reports on the AR5 ([What's in it for Africa](#), [South Asia](#) and [Small Island Developing States](#))
- A free downloadable [media toolkit](#) to facilitate discussion and knowledge sharing. The toolkit was comprised of infographics, presentations (with adaptable slides) and high quality images.

These products aimed to communicate the findings of the report in a simple, clear way for each region, targeting different audiences. They allowed for wider dissemination and uptake of the AR5 findings at the policy dialogue events.

Lessons learnt and recommendations

Policy dialogues and young scientist events

- There is a huge demand for more information at the regional and sub-regional level, not just amongst governments and policy makers, but amongst the business sector and civil society too. Participants at the four African events were interested in having more locally specific and actionable information. What should they start to do differently, taking into account their country context?
- The success of the outreach events in part was due to the active engagement of IPCC authors based in-country as they could offer more country context to the findings. They could also engage with young researchers, giving them practical advice on how they

¹ In addition to these outreach events, CDKN partnered with the IPCC and the Department of Environmental Affairs, South Africa to host a regional event in South Africa in November 2014. In Asia CDKN partnered with the IPCC to organise presentations by IPCC AR5 authors to the Low Emissions Strategies (LEDS) Asia Forum in Yogyakarta, Indonesia in November 2014. CDKN teamed up with SPREP in Samoa (September 2014) and the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre in Belize (October 2014) to co-host outreach meetings on the AR5 findings for Small Island Developing States.

could become more involved and how their research can contribute to the Reports. Where possible, nationals of the IPCC authors should be actively involved in outreach events.

- Through the young scientist event, CDKN aimed to encourage more African researchers to publish their research and to consider becoming involved in the IPCC to increase the level of African representation. There was significant appetite and enthusiasm for the event held co-hosted by Makerere University, which attracted 85 students. The students were from different disciplines and it started a dialogue around inter-disciplinary research on climate change – a necessary requirement to effectively deal with the impacts of climate change across sectors. The students were also interested in what it takes to become involved with the IPCC.
- CDKN's limited budget could only bring together participants who lived in the capital cities. This meant that the events tended to have a national-level bias, which was recognised by the participants. Demand was created for similar, more devolved work outside of the capitals.
- Social media played a critical role in sharing the findings from the outreach events, promoted networking and the continuation of the conversation beyond the expanse of the live event.
- Outreach events are expensive, both in terms of human resources and money. Trying to incorporate social media helped in some ways to bring the conversation to people who were not able to join. However this was quite limited and other options such as radio will be investigated for future outreach events.

Recommendations

1. Policymakers are the stated primary target audience of the IPCC, however, they aren't a homogenous group and information needs to be tailored for their use. In some countries, issues of climate change are still seen as the concern of the Ministries of environment, who often lack the power to ensure line Ministries take action to reduce the negative impacts of climate change and take up the opportunities presented. Working through the IPCC focal points (taking a cross-sectoral approach) and professional communicators would support the uptake of future Assessment Reports.
2. Working and engaging with other audiences, for example businesses, NGOs and the private sector will go a long way to building resilience into development. These 'agents of change' can be used to leverage further government action. However communication to these groups will need to be tailored, and packaged appropriately.
3. The IPCC could look to engage more with regional and country research institutions and centres of excellence to encourage more locally relevant applied research, particularly where gaps have been identified.
4. Linked to having more Authors from more African countries actively participating in the outreach events, more support is required by these Authors to execute their duties. This support could be in the form of promoting more research fellowships. In a context where there is limited skilled capacity in understanding climate change, African academics are generally overstretched and are often involved in multiple activities including teaching, research and consultancy work. In theory, with greater support, more African researchers would want to become IPCC authors and it would encourage more country specific research to be undertaken and considered for future assessment reports.
5. The IPCC should consider taking a multi-layered (regional, national and subnational) and sectoral approach to outreach events. This requires a disaggregation of the different stakeholders as the information needs will differ with each layer. This will also require partnering with different organisations and tailoring the message to the different stakeholders.
6. The IPCC should consider engaging with universities, as they are the producers of academic knowledge to encourage a new generation of Authors. The engagement should also include supporting the identification of country research gaps in policy relevant areas.

Derivative products and the journalist training

- The development of the derivative products was an iterative process along a knowledge chain involving technical scientific experts and professional climate communicators. CDKN established an oversight committee, comprised of IPCC Authors and a Co-Chair to ensure that the regional reports maintained the scientific rigour of the IPCC, whilst simultaneously broadening the accessibility of the science to non-scientists.
- There is a high demand for easily accessible information that is tailored to specific audiences. The success of the derivative reports has been in part due to the information being regionally specific and the communicability of the information. Although the IPCC's Summaries for Policy-Makers is highly regarded, it presents only a global summary and readers must refer to the very long chapters of the Working Group reports for regional data.
- Increasingly people want information that is easy to read and visually appealing. The infographics developed did exactly. Between July 2014 and mid-December 2015, 18,000 people visited the toolkit developed. The Africa toolkit has been viewed more than 1,600 times.
- Different skill sets are required- graphic designers, communicators, scientists and practitioners to ensure that the products will be useful to a broader set of policymakers.
- One of the key aims of the media toolkit was to encourage responsible journalism on the *Fifth Assessment Report*. Not only is the material being used in articles and blogs, in print, online and multimedia platforms, it is also being used to further educate journalists through workshops and training sessions.
- The media can be a powerful agent that can influence change; however how they do so is dependent on their social, political and cultural context. Therefore what drives their content and the power they may exercise on their audience will change with the context. Within this context, training journalists is key as they package information in a way that can be understood by laymen. The type of training required will need to be tailored to each context, and won't be the same in Uganda or Kenya for example.
- There is significant demand for more journalist and editors training. Training is unlikely to be funded by the media houses the journalists represent.

Recommendations

1. One of the challenges of the process experienced was finding IPCC Authors who had a significant amount of time to review multiple drafts. The IPCC through their Technical Support Unit could provide this support to partners developing derivative products.
2. Produce outputs that journalists can use for example free high quality images they can use in their stories as well as infographics, highlighting the key message from the assessment report.
3. Establish a communications advisory group that includes professional climate communicators, graphic designers and journalists during the development of the assessment reports, particularly if the IPCC goes on to develop multiple products. This group can advise on the communicability of the products and how the different products can be tailored to different audiences.
4. Work with partners to build the capacity of journalists and editors to understand the assessment reports so that they can produce more compelling and factually accurate media coverage on climate topics and to build their contacts with IPCC authors as future reference points.
5. More emphasis should be put on case studies particularly for the WGIII report- showcasing low emission options for developing countries as there weren't enough case studies for sub-regions.