* Adaptation Training Initiative *  
weADAPT

Module:  
Climate Risks Communication

Developed by Tahia Devisscher (SEI) with input from Anna Taylor (SEI) and Lawrence Flint (ENDA) Contact:  
tahia.devisscher@sei.se

Last updated: December 2010
WHAT IS RISK COMMUNICATION?

RISK is...

risk = hazard + vulnerability

where vulnerability = exposure + sensitivity (related to coping capacity)
WHAT IS RISK COMMUNICATION?

COMMUNICATION is...

dynamic, interactive process of sharing information and co-generating knowledge using one or a number of approaches, methods and tools, usually with a specific intended purpose.
WHY RISK COMMUNICATION?

- Despite scientific progress in understanding potential impacts of climate change, communicating those impacts in the context of risks to society remains a challenge.

- Those at risk have a wealth of experiential knowledge of past / current impacts and responses that can be shared.

- Information in forms that are not readily useful to stakeholders and decision makers leads to misunderstanding and in-action.

- Pro-actively engage stakeholders in an effort to create awareness, shared understandings and collaborative actions.

- Support adaptation decisions and planning processes, means for empowerment, innovation and social transformation.
LESSONS LEARNED ON KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- **Know the context:** What are the local perceptions of climate risks? How do people deal with risk? What is the knowledge baseline (gaps and strengths)? Who takes the decisions? What are the development priorities?

- **Build a two-way dialogue:** How can communities, authorities, and scientists share their understanding on climate risks? How can they explain the meanings that are difficult? How to define climate change in locally relevant terms?

This dialogue leads to collective generation of knowledge and shared understandings!
LESSONS LEARNED ON KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- **Engagement in the process**: What participatory and innovative approaches can be used to engage different stakeholder groups? How to support ownership and facilitate learning?

- **Diverse approaches**: How do we combine tools and methods to account for varying interests, capacities and backgrounds?

There are many tools and methods, the key is to choose the ones that best fit the purpose and the stakeholder group you would like to engage in the process!
TOOLS AND METHODS USED IN THE ACCCA PROJECT

1. Brochure/Bulletin
   - Mongolia, India, Bangladesh, Philippines, Nigeria, Mali
2. Poster
   - India, Ghana, Nigeria, Nepal, Bangladesh
3. Project Magazine, Newspaper Articles
   - Philippines, Nigeria
4. TV & Radio Broadcasts
   - Philippines, Mongolia, India, Ghana, Tanzania, Nigeria
5. Powerpoint Presentation
   - Mongolia, Mali
6. Peer Reviewed Article
   - Kenya, Malawi, Philippines
7. Role-play, Drama & Music
   - Mali, India, Kenya, Ghana, Malawi
8. Group Discussions
   - Mongolia, Nepal, Bangladesh, Philippines, Ghana, Tanzania
9. Training of Trainers
   - Ghana, Kenya, Malawi
10. Videos
    - Malawi, Philippines, Mongolia, Kenya
11. Policy Briefs
    - Mongolia, Kenya

Stakeholder Audience:
- International
- National
- Local
LESSONS LEARNED ON KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- **Recognizing uncertainty**: This is maybe the most challenging one, as it is difficult to communicate uncertainty.

Some future climate scenarios say that it will rain more, some say that it will rain less… What should we do? Should we try to think about ways of using water considering both possibilities? On the other hand, what can we tell with certainty?
An example of uncertainty: how would you communicate this?

An example of projections for Livingstone station in Zambia for the period 2046-2065 using a range of climate models.

**Analysis of the climatologist:** There is likely to be a decrease in precipitation from Sep-Dec, although the magnitude of this increase is uncertain. Also, there is likely to be an increase in precipitation in later season rainfall from Jan-May. Heavy rainfall events will likely continue to be a major hazard in Zambia and lead to increased flooding.

**For discussion:** How did the climatologist deal with uncertainty? What risks for the agriculture sector do you foresee and how to communicate this to farmers?
LESSONS LEARNED ON KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- **Building networks:** How can informal as well as formal structures be developed or strengthened to sustain the efforts achieved through climate risk communication?

There are different networks and ways of working together. This is an example of a tsunami early warning network in Africa. Networks can be local, national, regional, and international.
Networks: Sharing knowledge and learning on climate risk communication

Adaptation Layer
weADAPT 3.0
Networks:
Local initiatives for climate risk communication

Featured Projects

Red Cross media actions to sensibilize communities in preparing for floods in Togo

The project aims at reducing flood-induced damages and loss of life in flood-prone areas along Togo’s rivers by reinforcing the existing community-based flood preparedness and early warning system implemented by the Red Cross during the past two years. One core component of this project is an awareness raising campaign via theatre plays, dances and chants which are publicly performed by local theatre groups and their broadcasting on local radio stations in the respective local languages.

Country: Togo
Organization: Togolese Red Cross in cooperation with German Red Cross

Engaging community radio in climate change adaptation research and advocacy in Africa

This project supports pioneering community radio stations in Ghana to share the latest climate change research with local policymakers and local communities, in formats that they can understand and use. Importantly, these radio stations will also be a platform for communities to share their valuable knowledge with each other and with others
CONTENT OF RISK COMMUNICATION NEEDS TO ACCOUNT FOR...

• **Complex information in friendly formats:** Combine primary and secondary information and try to convert it into user-friendly formats, for example, try to represent data with pictures, or stories of familiar events, or illustrative graphs...

• **Relevant terms:** consider the local know-how and context, for example, take into consideration the time scales of local development plans, the local perceptions and priorities, the socio-cultural context, and the local meanings and language...

Validate the content of your tools and methods with the stakeholder groups before implementing them!
Musical performance in Mali, lyrics in local language
Focus group discussion with herders in Mongolia
Musical with lyrics pertaining to climate change risks in India, and poster discussion
Participatory video-making in Malawi
Workshops and trainings in Senegal
Developing communication strategies:

Step-based approach with indicative questions that relate to key considerations.

1. What are you hoping to achieve during this communication?

2. In order to do this, who do you have to communicate with?

3. How do you introduce yourself and engage on an equal basis in order to understand each other’s context, know-how and intentions?

4. How do you foster two-way dialogue and identify promising approaches for effective climate risk communication to happen?
Developing communication strategies:

Step-based approach with indicative questions that relate to key considerations:

5. Reflect upon what you have learned and consider the content relevant to this specific case.

6. Reflect upon what you have learned and consider the content relevant to this specific case.

7. How will you test if the tools/methods you selected are effective in that context, and revise or change completely based on feedback?
Developing communication strategies:

Step-based approach with indicative questions that relate to key considerations

8. How would you use the tools and methods to reach a negotiated understanding of the climate risk and what can/will/should be done?

9. Did you achieve what you set up in step 1? What lessons have you learned and how do you follow-up?

10. Is it worth scaling up or replicating this activity? If so, how would you do it?
TO SUM UP: ATTRIBUTES OF EFFECTIVE RISK COMMUNICATION

- Understanding the local decision-making context and baseline climate-related knowledge

- Encouraging interaction and dialogue between different stakeholders from civil society, government, academia and private sector

- Empowering through processes of negotiation and co-generation of knowledge to establish shared understandings around climate risks and promoting innovative practices

- Facilitating and supporting iterative processes of social learning through active partnerships, collaboration, and informed action
This module was developed with funding support from:

- *The European Commission through EuropeAid Co-Operation Office*
- *Irish Aid*
- *Danish International Development Agency*
- *Swiss Federal Office for the Environment*
- *Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency*

The funders were not involved in the design of these training materials and do not necessarily support the views advanced.
THANK YOU

*Materials in the ‘Adaptation Training Initiative’ in weADAPT are licensed under a* 
[Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/)

For additional supporting information please visit
[www.weADAPT.org](http://www.weADAPT.org)

If you wish to access an editable version of this work, please contact: [tahia.devisscher@sei.se](mailto:tahia.devisscher@sei.se)