

Acting on What we Know and Learn for Climate and Development Policy

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Final Report



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ACTING ON WHAT WE KNOW AND LEARN FOR CLIMATE DEVELOPMENT POLICY

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Acronyms

GEF EO- Global Environmental Facility Evaluation Office
CDKN - Climate & Development Knowledge Network
CCAFS - Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security
IDS – Institute of Development Studies
KB - Knowledge Broker
DRR – Disaster Risk Reduction

Acknowledgements

This report tells the story of an event which came together through conversations between a variety of actors who were all, in different ways, asking themselves similar questions. What are we learning from the work we do around climate policy? How might we learn differently, so as to be able to act more effectively on what we know? This interaction sparked the inclusive, iterative process through which our experimental format and process emerged, attracted the funds to hold the event and the clarity on who needed to be present. In the organisations which sponsored our knowledge exchange, there were key individuals without whose interest, time and commitment it would not have been possible. We are therefore deeply grateful to the following people/organisations.

From the Climate Change and Social Learning initiative we gained our three excellent facilitators, Pete Cranston, Carl Jackson and Ewen LeBorgne. They marshalled our straggly thoughts into a seamless, flexible, two day process thoroughly grounded in a social learning approach. Staunch support for a social learning agenda, from Patti Kristjanson and Philip Thornton at CCAFS, allowed Carl, Ewen and Pete to get involved.

At the Climate and Development Knowledge Network, Geoff Barnard brought enthusiasm, invaluable experience, humour, great ideas for the process and sold the idea to his colleagues in a big way.

At GEF Evaluation Office, Rob van den Berg helped clarify our vision, co-organised a focussed and well structured learning theme, made impassioned contributions and galvanised the evaluation community to engage within and far beyond the event.

At IDRC (and at IDS), Blane Harvey made the crucial bridge to the CCSL initiative in the first place and co-organised, with Fatema Rajabali of IDS, the learning theme on intermediaries and knowledge brokers, strengthening our ties to the global south.

At IDS, The Climate Change Team took up the mantle for the event and pitched in with time, effort and good judgment whenever called upon to do so; in particular, Terry Cannon, leader of the Disasters theme, and Lars Otto Naess, team leader. Lawrence Haddad and Jim Sumberg put substantial funding – courtesy of DfID – behind our intentions, cementing the basis on which other sponsors were able to commit. They had faith in us at the time when the event looked most difficult to pull off. Sarah Jack was the logistical and administrative star of the event and generally stopped things from falling apart. Lezette Engelbrecht, Michelle Mockbee, Yvonne Nti and Karnika Palwa made excellent and strenuous efforts to record in image, sound and word the whole of the knowledge exchange.

And last but by no means least, a huge thank you to our participants, who taught us all about what can and cannot be learned in two days!

Introduction

The Challenge

On the 5th and 6th March 2013, the Climate Change Team at IDS organised a knowledge exchange which aimed to explore how learning is (or isn't) taking place in climate and development policy spaces, and whether the knowledge we are generating is acted upon. As a complex problem, climate change requires us to work and to learn differently. This means breaking down disciplinary silos, and drawing upon a diversity of perspectives and voices, linked through a range of brokers and intermediaries who do not play the same role as a 'subject expert'. As a result, in the context of international development, our understanding both of the challenges and of how to shape responses is still emerging and evolving.

An increasing number of organisations and actors have been reflecting on how to learn better for climate policy, whilst a range of experiences suggests a mixed bag so far for efforts to translate what we do and do not know about climate change into policy action.

The Response

The IDS Climate Change Team had been in conversation about these issues with a number of key actors in the field, each with their own learning agenda for climate policy:

1. The Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security Initiative (CCAFS)
2. The Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN)
3. The UK Department for International Development (DfID)
4. The Global Environment Facility Evaluation Office (GEF EO)
5. International Development Research Canada (IDRC)

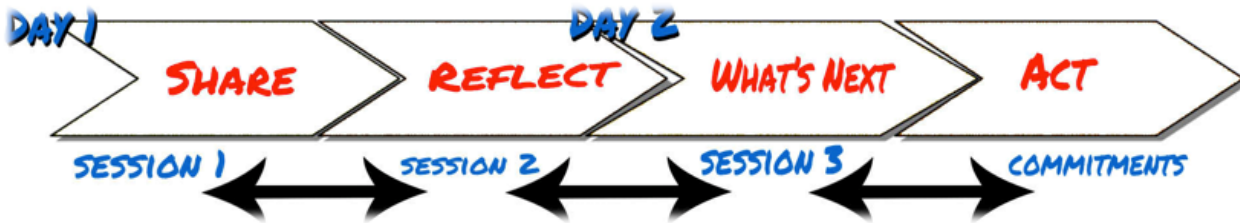
As a result of our conversations, we decided to come together to take stock, share and chart the next steps, the result of which was the knowledge exchange. The event brought together actors from government, donor, research and civil society spaces, to include a diversity of perspectives and learning opportunities. Reflecting the challenges, priorities, expertise, networks and ways of working of the group of organisers, the knowledge exchange was structured around four learning themes.

1. Whose knowledge counts? Locally-held knowledge for climate change adaptation (IDS & CCAFS), looking at the ways in which locally-held knowledge is brought into climate policy and practice, what is missing and what might change.
2. Brokers, translators and intermediaries: new roles and challenges for putting knowledge into practice (IDRC, IDS, USAID), seeking to explore the changing role of the 'knowledge worker' in climate and development, performing brokering and intermediary functions at the boundaries of different fields of practice.
3. How to learn from climate change evaluations (CDKN & GEF EO), exploring the barriers and opportunities for getting evaluation findings to a wider audience and learning more from the vast datasets available.
4. Extreme events and disaster risk reduction (DRR): what are we not learning? (IDS), which endeavoured to understand why DRR policy and practice seemed frequently not to take account of the behaviour of people exposed to potential or actual disasters.



The Process

From early on in the planning, it was clear that there was a desire to ensure the knowledge exchange was not just a discussion space, but one which should lead us to make the jump from learning to action. For this reason, we departed from the conference format (as detailed in a Climate Change Team blog in the lead up to the event). We decided instead upon a process whereby participants could share experiences, learn and reflect on these, and then identify next steps, to act on after the event.



Underpinning our process was thinking taken from social learning, in particular tapping into the concept of 'triple-loop learning':

- 1) **Single Loop - Instrumental learning** (acquiring new knowledge individually);
- 2) **Double Loop - Communicative learning** (understanding/interpreting knowledge through interaction with others);
- 3) **Triple Loop - Transformative learning** (collectively examining underlying assumptions, leading to change in attitudes and social norms).

Structure of the event report

This event report is comprised of the following four sections. The first describes the discussions, interactions and outcomes of each of the four learning themes. The second highlights the 'marketplace of commitments' in which the actions that different actors committed to were collated. The third provides analysis and reflections on the outcome of the knowledge exchange, whilst the fourth offers concluding remarks.

Brief reflections on the outcomes of the event

The event was held to be very fruitful by participants. A number of commitments to change working practices, or develop a project or idea jointly arose from it, and there was plenty of evidence of 'single' and 'double' loop modes of learning. The quick evaluation at the end of the event revealed that a majority held it to be a worthwhile and useful event to have attended. The learning themes served to:

- chart what needed to change in the 'current state of play' in participants' respective areas of practice
- consolidate existing working relationships – as in the case of the evaluation and knowledge brokers themes
- build new working relationships – as in the 'whose knowledge counts' theme

The 'marketplace of commitments' likewise generated a considerable number of actions to take as a result of the knowledge exchange.

However, there was also a sense in which the event was over-ambitious: despite the emphasis on social learning, the extent to which it happened in practice was less than we had envisaged. What was in evidence was individual, instrumental learning (loop 1), and both the plenary discussions and the breakout groups facilitated learning through interaction with a group (loop 2). However, the idea of transforming practice through collective learning was, in hindsight, not something that could be realistically achieved

over the course of a two day workshop. One of our facilitators, Ewen LeBorgne, has reflected at length on the reasons for this in a blog posting (<http://km4meu.wordpress.com/2013/03/13/musings-about-learning-about-action-about-change-in-an-exchange/>), but in short there simply was not enough time for it. In a post-event interview, participant Liz Carlile of the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), reflected that social learning is a process which occurs over great lengths of time. Nevertheless, she added, the event did serve to introduce this approach to a broader range of actors, and therefore could find a wider sphere for application in future. We may not have got to the end of a social learning process, but the event could well have been the beginning of one.



Learning Theme 1: Whose knowledge counts? Locally held knowledge for climate change adaptation



Day 1: Sharing and Reflections

This learning theme was organised by Andy Newsham of IDS and Pete Cranston, a knowledge management expert working with the CCAFS Climate Change and Social Learning Initiative. It started from the premise that whilst locally-held knowledge was sometimes brought into climate policy processes, there was a lot of experience from its previous use in other development fields that was not being drawn upon. The organisers proposed that drawing on this could help to avoid engagement with locally held knowledge being reduced to a 'box-ticking exercise'. The aim was a) to understand the current state of play with regard to how locally held knowledge was being used in climate policy, b) to consider what alternative models of policy engagement with locally-held knowledge might look like and c) to see what the next steps might be towards bringing about such alternatives.

The first session of the first day split the theme into three breakout groups and visualised current climate policy through case studies, with the aim of identifying the ways in which locally-held knowledge currently does (or does not) come into climate policy processes. Instead of leaving power to the last moment of a workshop and thereby not giving enough time to deal with it, the group chose to put it at the core of the discussions from the outset. Current policy processes were explored in terms of the relationships between different actors and correspondingly different levels of power they had to influence policy. The second session was organised in a similar manner, with the theme split into three groups, this time with the aim of visualising how climate policy might look if it engaged more profoundly with locally-held knowledge. The groups then worked back from this idealised process to the current state of affairs and tried to identify the changes that would be required to achieve such a process.

Between the two sessions there was a plenary where the groups exchanged and explored the results of their discussions and the diagrams they had produced. The summary below features only one of the diagrams that were produced, as it was this which the group found most insightful and which stimulated much of the thinking on next steps.

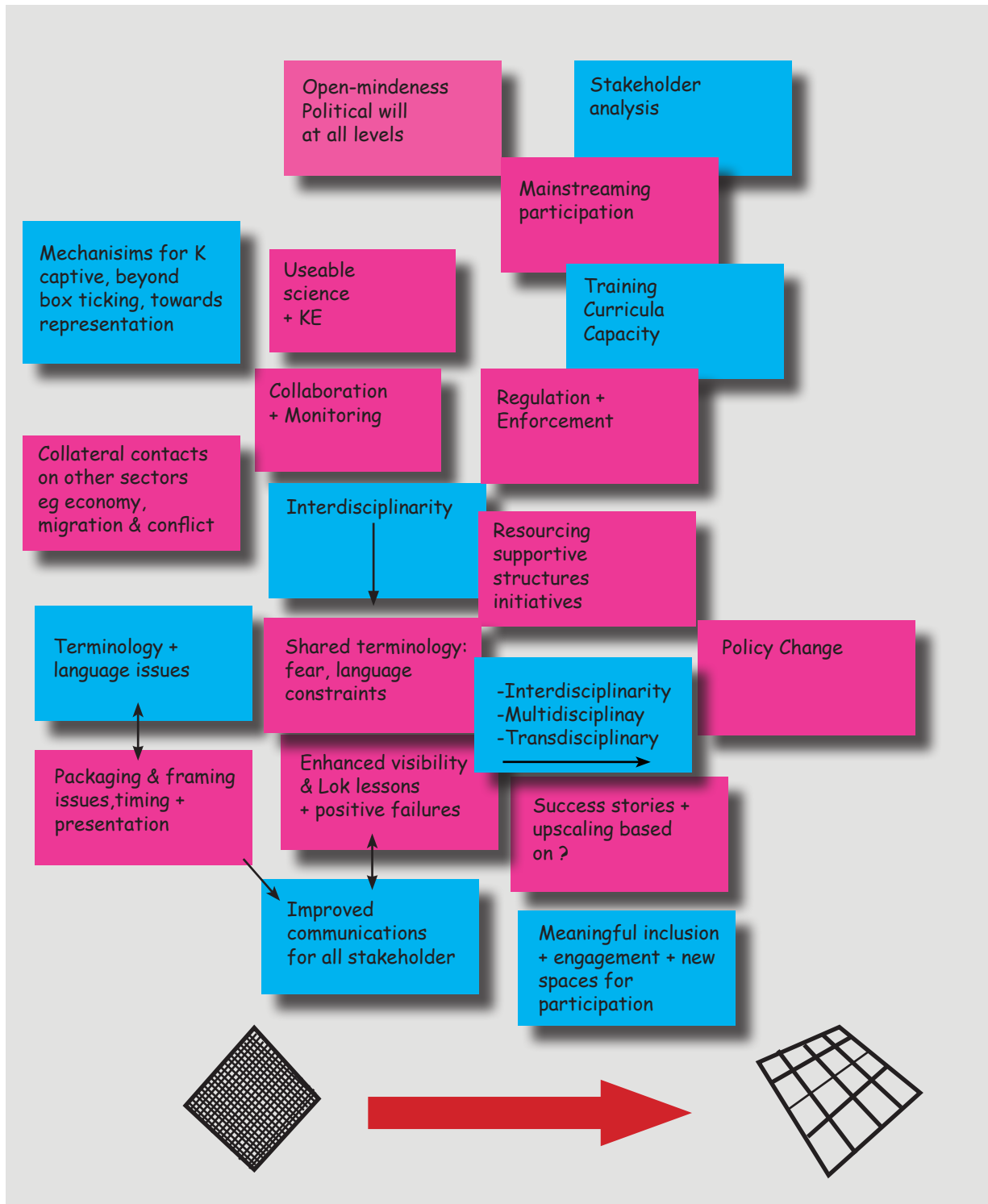
Summary of Outcomes

- Climate policy makers need processes and knowledge that help them to deal with uncertainty. Locally-held knowledge has much to contribute to dealing with uncertainty
- Power is often centralised in the policy process at the national and international level., the people most affected by climate change need to be part of the decision making process that frames what knowledge is valuable for policy
- Policy processes are by no means transparent, especially between local and national levels. Locally, the question of whose knowledge counts is often brokered by local-level intermediaries and organisations that are not necessarily representative of the diversity of local opinion
- Climate policy looks to scientific knowledge as a basis for decisions and guidance. This is not wrong per se, but locally-held knowledge is often a rich and high-resolution repository for adaptation and mitigation policy, and the balance between the two could be better struck

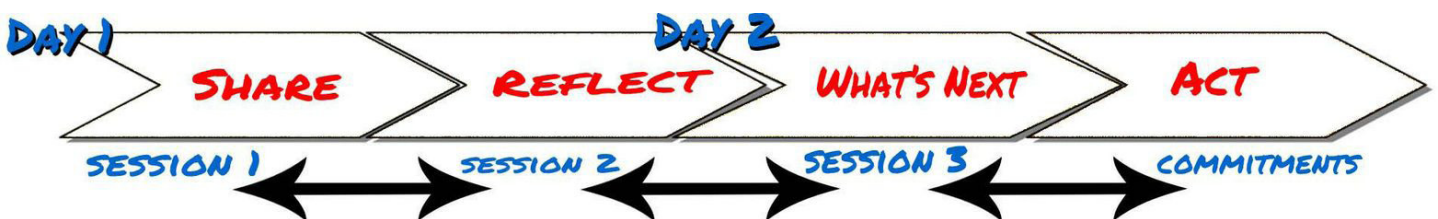
- Key to better incorporating locally-held knowledge into climate policy as an effort that goes beyond 'box ticking' is to engage with it not just as a useful input, but as a manifestation of a 'thicker' socio-cultural, political and economic context
- Too often 'knowledge' and 'identity' are treated as static categories in policy processes, which can mask the considerable variety of positions and behaviours found in even one 'policy actor' or 'indigenous activist'. Perhaps one way to address this 'individual and collective schizophrenia' is to identify the points at which such different identities overlap, the points at which mutual understanding (and, preferably, interests) emerge
- Part of exploiting these points or moments of convergence between people often set up in opposition to each other (policy actor—indigenous activist) is to build more collaborative spaces and institutions that allow local actors more power to input knowledge into the policy process
- A metaphor that emerged for understanding 'whose knowledge counts' in climate policy processes was the 'filter' (see diagram). The filter image refers to the assembly of people, genders, networks, politics, narratives, funding streams, and other processes which determine whose voices are heard in the policy process and what decisions are taken
- Locally-held knowledge often does not find its way through the filter, or is reinterpreted in the process. In order for locally-held knowledge to count for more, do we need to have a more open, less finely meshed filter?
- Universities, government and educational institutes might usefully incorporate locally held knowledge to their teaching activity and research on climate change policy
- Even though there is awareness of the importance of gender as a key differential in whose knowledge counts, women continue to have few opportunities to take roles of power and influence
- Where there are fewer people, there is more power for those who make decisions, and where there are more people there is less power to influence decisions



The figure below describes the process which could bring about positive change to whose knowledge counts for climate policy. The figure displays an 'open filter' which allows more knowledge into the policy process, and the factors required to open the filter.



Day 2: Reflecting, What's Next and Intended Actions



Day 2

The breakout session on the second day involved the entire group sitting in a circle and reflecting on the knowledge generated on day 1 with the aim of identifying the next steps, and seeing whether any of these could be taken after the knowledge exchange. Much of the conversation explored whether it would be useful to form a network which could try to take forward the idea of changing whose knowledge counts in climate policy. Whilst there was agreement that much remained to be done to achieve this objective, there was a consensus that adding another network to the proliferation of initiatives already in existence may not be the most useful way of going about it.

The discussion had another function, which was to encourage participants to make a commitment to change something in their own way of working, both personally and organisationally. These ideas were written on cards and displayed in the 'marketplace of commitments' (see below)..

Summary of Outcomes

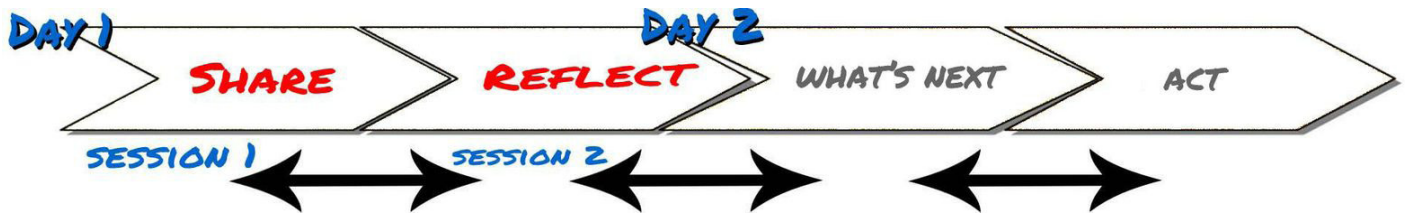
- Ultimately, the political economy of whose knowledge counts affects the way resources are allocated. Power is very important in this process, and something needs to change. What is still lacking is a comprehensive analysis of the workings of the 'power filter' in climate policy processes and the trade-offs, winners and losers that ensue from the current 'status quo'
- It was also agreed that reducing locally-held knowledge to the status of a technical input, as remains common in climate policy processes, is more of a hindrance than a help
- However, precisely what should change, how to bring it about and the particular role of this assembled group in that process, was less clear. Even though a network within the present participants could be useful, it was agreed that the conversation could also be opened out and taken to another level, to put together a different assembly of stakeholders
- There was interest in developing the idea of the power filter, potentially as an underpinning for an analysis which looked at where, why and how locally held knowledge does and does not come into climate policy processes. Potential case study candidates were Kenya, Namibia, Northern Canada, Uganda and Zimbabwe

Creating new filters in policy processes and feedback loops is about power, access and respect. Who engages in creating this filter and how it works is an expression of whose knowledge counts.

Pete Cranston



Learning Theme 2: Brokers, Translators and Intermediaries: new roles and challenges for putting knowledge into practice



Day 1: Sharing and Reflecting

This learning theme looked to reflect on recent developments in the field of knowledge brokering. There is a lot of talk about knowledge 'co-construction', but to what extent is it really happening? What are the implications for the ethical and working practices of the recently-emerged 'knowledge worker', who performs brokering and intermediary functions at the boundaries of different fields of practice? By charting out the roles and responsibilities of the 'knowledge worker' the learning theme sought to provide lessons for the broker and intermediary community of practice. There were a number of parallels with learning theme one, especially around the interface between climate policy and locally-held knowledge.

For the first breakout on day one, the theme broke out into groups and mapped out their functions as knowledge brokers. They chose four quadrants to represent their positions as knowledge brokers and then used five questions to direct the discussion. The aim was to map out where knowledge brokering is currently at and the challenges knowledge brokers face.

1. How are you doing what you are describing?
2. For whom?
3. Why?
4. What works?
5. What are the challenges?

For the second breakout session, the group reinterpreted the knowledge in order to improve collective approaches, and asked the question, 'What could be?' The discussion was guided by four questions based on points that had emerged in the first session.

1. What are the risks and responsibilities of a knowledge broker?
2. What does success look like?
3. Can knowledge brokering lead to transformation or are we just re-circulating information?
4. Scale and context – how do we take ideas to scale and what are the limits?

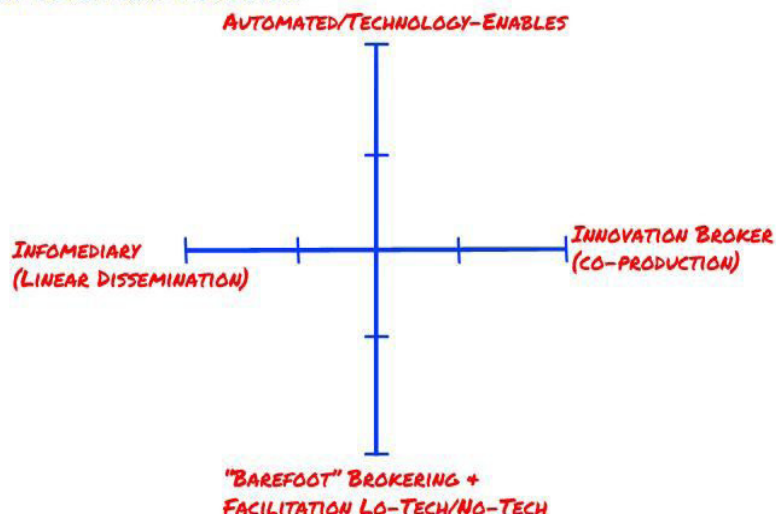
Day 2

On the second day, participants aimed to create transformative change by reflecting on the assumptions made by the dominant forms of knowledge influencing their roles. During this breakout, members of the intermediaries group reflected on the previous day's activities and were asked to come up with 'ways forward' which reflected the changes they hoped to see in the climate change policy process. They were asked to suggest changes at three levels: the personal, the institutional and the wider context.

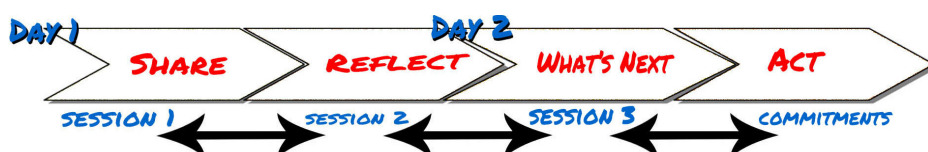
Summary of Outcomes

- The network of knowledge brokers brought together at this event should be continued. Sharing the information from the event is an opportunity for outreach to an audience beyond the participants, an important next step (as in the case of the 'whose knowledge counts' theme)
- There needs to be a long-term, sustainable approach to the issue of 'broken links' between policy makers and knowledge generators on the ground that often do not have access to feedback from research on policy
- Language is a barrier to many: much of the terminology in the arena of climate change and development does not translate into the languages of those affected by climate change
- When creating brokering information, there needs to be a process or space to interpret, understand and act on this information through shared decision-making
- There remains a need to create a framework to understand local processes and actions that do not currently connect to the level at which climate policy makers tend to operate
- There needs to be common understanding of the starting point for knowledge brokering
- It will be important to address the issue of trust and risks of reliance on particular types of interventions, e.g. people becoming dependent on new approaches, while abandoning local knowledge
- Access to technology and information should be analysed at all levels of policy
- The professional knowledge broker can be seen as a 'resilient actor', one who needs to be flexible and respond to unexpected risks. There are also many risks of personal accountability as a knowledge broker
- There is a need to understand whether knowledge brokering is a role or a function
- It is necessary to identify how success is measured in adaptive capacity, which is as much a process as an outcome

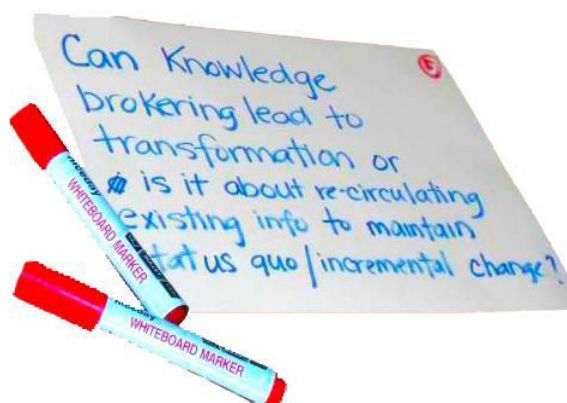
MAPPING INTERMEDIARY AND BOUNDARY WORK BY FORM AND FUNCTION



Day 2: Reflecting, What's Next and Intended Actions



Summary of Outcomes



Day 2

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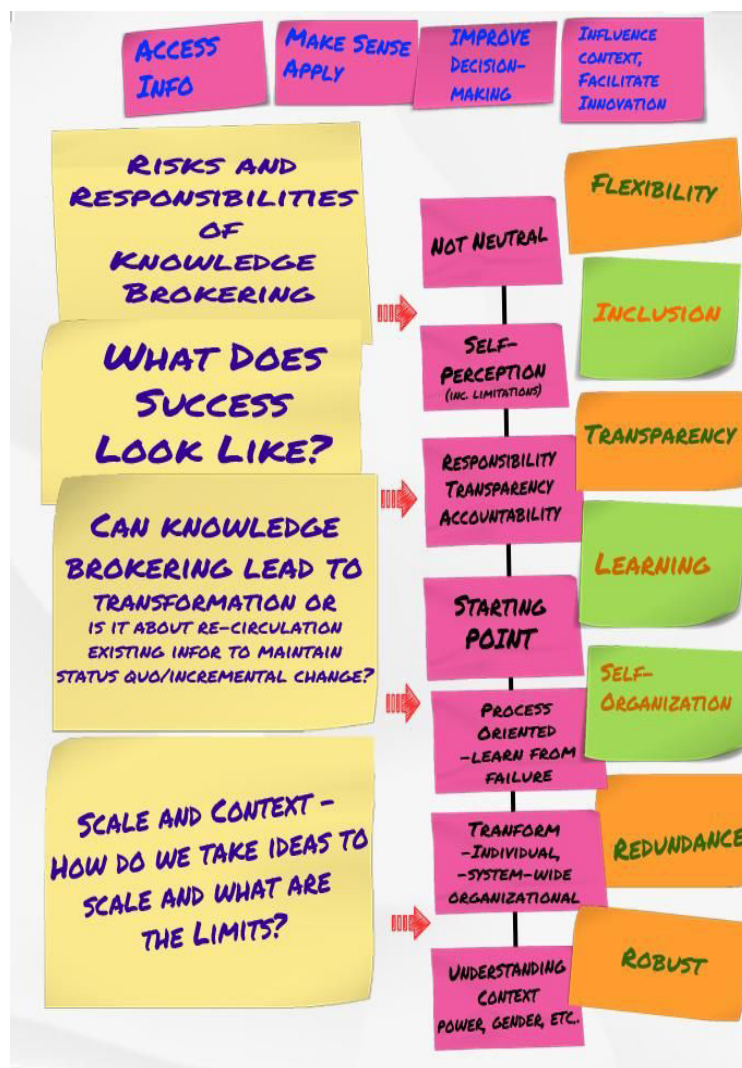
Personal

- As a knowledge broker, I have a responsibility to be flexible and adaptable
- As a knowledge broker, it is important to understand my context and the power dynamics within that e.g. gender impacts and influences
- I aim to gain a broader understanding of terminology, how concepts translate into other languages, and what others understand as brokering.
- This has renewed my commitment to more diverse production and translation of my work



Institutional

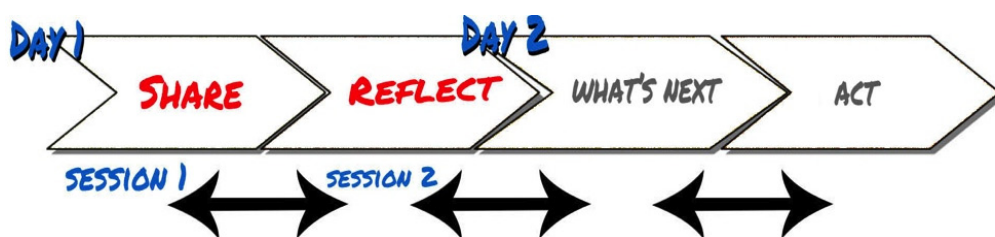
- We need to improve our understanding of how institutions can become better knowledge brokers
- Knowledge brokers need to better connect the beginning and end of policy processes to avoid repeated mistakes
- Knowledge brokering can be a useful lens for finding opportunities within an organisation and using its existing resources
- The issue of information which is potentially relevant to the public good being controlled by individuals needs to be dealt with



Wider context

- We need to not just transfer knowledge, but create a space for multiple sources of knowledge to intersect
- There is a need to bring complementary activities and actors together A stronger focus on values and ethics, on the consequences of our practices, is required
- The group committed to sharing the results of the workshop with the Climate Knowledge Brokers group
- We need to improve our understanding of how institutions become better knowledge brokers
- How do we bridge the roles of tech-based and 'barefoot' (i.e. low-tech, local-level) brokers?
- We need to address the fact that the language being used and the concepts being identified can shift from group to group and over time

Learning Theme 3: How to Learn from Climate Change Evaluations



Day 1: Sharing and Reflecting

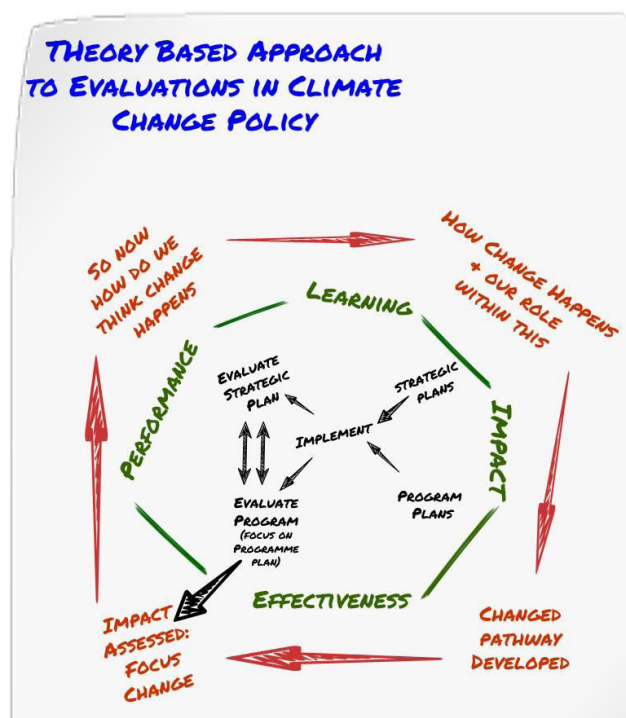
This learning theme focussed on how organisations learn about the impact and performance of their climate and development policies and interventions, how learning travels within and between organisations, and how effectively this learning is translated into organisation-wide changes in priorities, policies, and practices. Evaluation and monitoring, as well as results-based management, aim to inject feedback from “what is happening” into organisations. The task is urgent given the scale, urgency and dynamic nature of the climate challenges. But learning routes through evaluation and monitoring are rarely as direct and straightforward as we would wish. Why is this, and what can we do to overcome the barriers that get in the way? These were the two fundamental questions posed by theme organisers Rob van den Berg of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and Geoff Barnard of the Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN).

Rob van den Berg introduced the first session on day one. He raised the challenge of combining accountability and learning in the policy evaluation process. He continued to say that we need evaluations that are formative, encouraging us to think ahead, not just consider what has already happened. The participants were then split into two storytelling circles. Several stories were told within the groups before a discussion amongst the whole theme on the learning drawn from the stories.

For the second session of the day, the theme was split into three groups, each addressing a specific question about how to improve the evaluation process

Break out group I: Summary of Outcomes

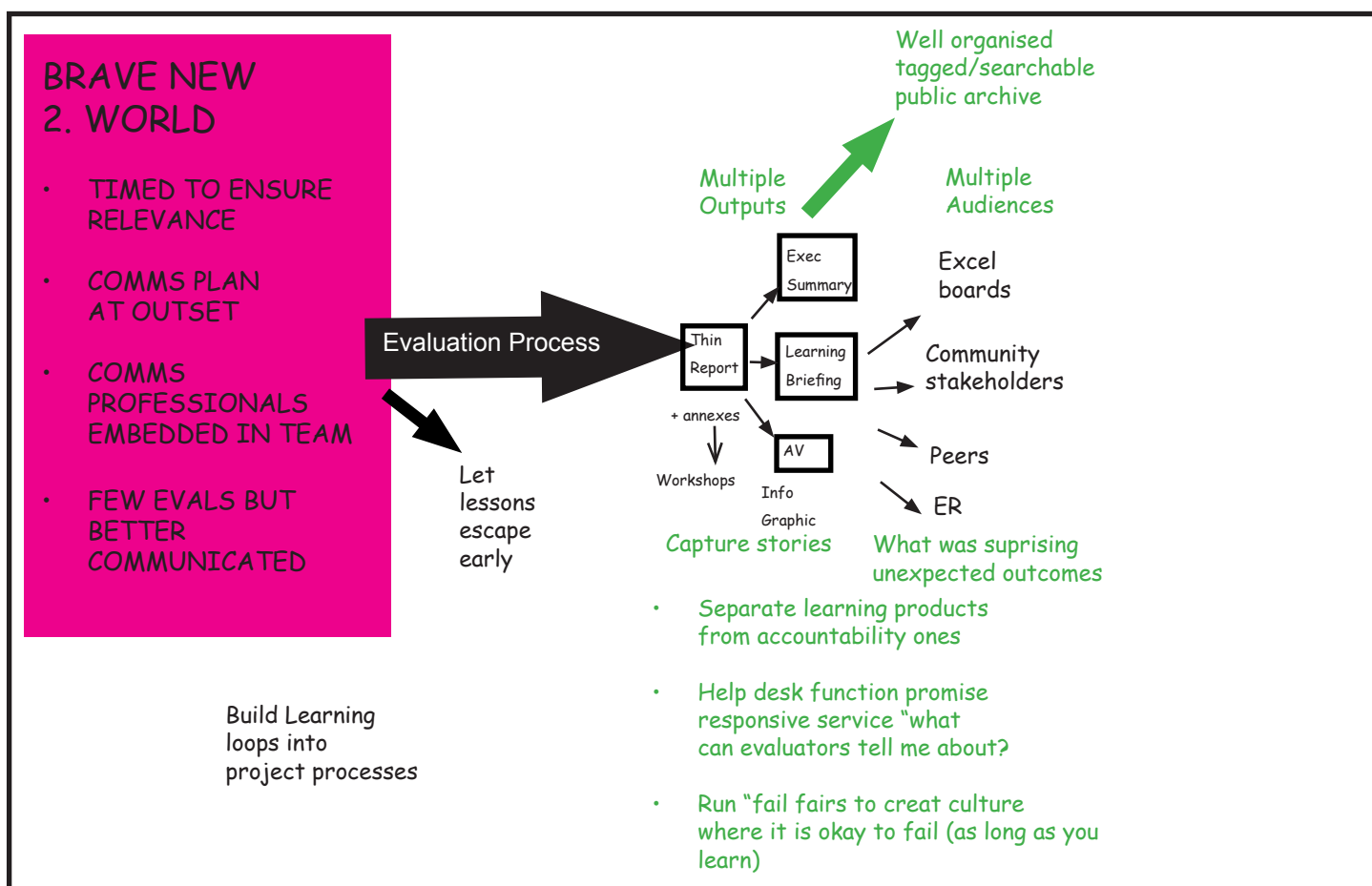
- In the evaluations it was noted that learning took place during the knowledge exchange, but doubts remained about what the learning would ultimately achieve, or how it could create actions to change policy processes in the future
- Evaluation is not often framed as a learning process, and the learning aspect of evaluation work is often forgotten within organisations
- The role of the evaluator changes during the evaluation, leaving gaps in the learning process
- Evaluators, individually, need to be accountable for their outputs to follow up with evaluations in the future What does this mean?
- Failures should be interpreted as constructive events that evaluators can learn from
- Those in the policy process that are not evaluators do not thoroughly understand the impact of local stakeholders on internal mechanisms and dynamics that can affect a certain project



- Because of the unpredictability of projects from design through to evaluation, evaluators must be flexible
- Evaluators need to be aware that there are different audiences for the outcomes of evaluation actions and thus they need to make evaluations accessible and useful with respect to actors in the climate change arena
- Evaluators need to look at who is funding projects and what the ultimate purpose of these projects is, whether it is about accountability or learning
- Theory-Based Evaluation is an approach to evaluation which brings together the concepts of Theories of Change and Realistic Evaluation. It is an innovative process that works with projects and programs from the beginning to ensure that an evaluator's role is not just to judge and evaluate what occurred, but also to tease out the implications for the future success of the project itself.

Breakout group 2: 'How can we better communicate lessons from evaluations?'

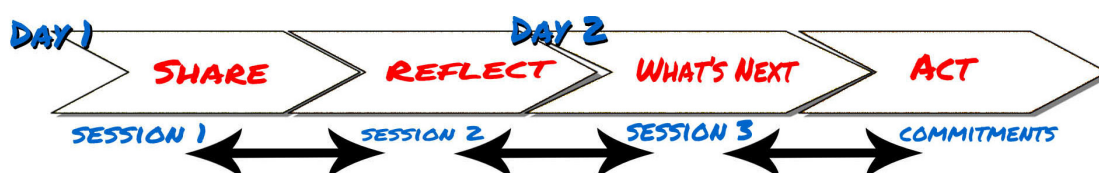
Breakout group 2 sought to tackle the problem that evaluation results are frequently not heeded. They produced two visualisations. The first was of the current situation – in which thick, impenetrable reports do not get read and recommend 'too much too late', leading to a lack of learning around what works and what does not. The second envisages a 'brave new world' for evaluation (see diagram), in which learning is built into the process from an early stage, results are offered not just in long reports but also in short summaries and other formats (i.e. videos) tailored to different audiences, and in a context where there is space to discuss openly and learn from failure.



Breakout group 2 also sought to suggest ways in which lessons learned from evaluation could be better communicated, and devised a table which identified key problems, whilst suggesting solutions (see below).

How can we better communicate lessons learned from evaluation?	
Problems	Solutions
Learning and communicating	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reports too long and technical - Too hard to find un-collated reports - Evaluations often not in public domain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Customise for differing external audiences - Write clear exec. summaries, - Publish short summaries separate from complete report - Develop online platforms/effective tagging - Innovative story telling (what were the surprises?) - Build learning loops in from the beginning, not just at the end - Separate communications on accountability & learning outcomes?
Political-institutional	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Funding often restricted - Nervousness at communicating because of politics - It is difficult to allow bad news to become public ☑ learning stops - Communications is an afterthought 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop knowledge management & comms strategy & team - Consider doing fewer evaluations, better communicated - Evaluators could use independence to advocate for good practice - Create spaces to publish unexpected outcomes/unused evidence - Share drafts earlier, let stories out - Convene workshops for acting upon evaluation findings - Helpdesk approach – dataset mining ‘on demand’

Day 2: Reflecting, What's Next? and the Intended ctions



Day 2

The second day started with a short session to collect reflections, comments and questions from the participants of the programme on cross-themes.

The theme then reflected on the 'Theory based approach' model and 'Evaluation results' diagram from the first day. Out of this activity, some questions were raised about the approaches for further reflection.

Breakout group 2: Summary of Outcomes

- The current method of producing a thick document at the end of the process can be a waste of time if, as is common, it is seldom read, let alone acted upon
- More and better communication is needed with the idea of ‘fewer evaluations, better communicated’ floated, alongside better communication techniques – such as videos, info-graphics, interviews etc). Communications remains under-resourced in many evaluation organisations
- There is a risk that evaluation processes become too protective of politically sensitive or contentious findings; it should be possible to share these from an early stage

Organisations should be allowed to learn from failure and remain accountable

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Day 2: Summary of Outcomes

- The thick, unloved and unread evaluation report cannot be the future of evaluation policy and practice: viva the communications revolution!
- Evaluators are also knowledge brokers and can learn from greater interaction with the brokers and intermediaries community
- Collective learning is the key to future progress in evaluation. Learning must be seen as an incremental process (not an outcome) that involves reflection and learning from mistakes.
- Accountability was flagged as a lynchpin for deeper learning
- Evaluation can be tested on its effectiveness, performance and impact, but should be compatible with the change that is being targeted
- Organisations must allow space to learn from failures in an evaluation process that is a part of the policy process from the beginning
- Evaluation processes are overly protective of the information flowing throughout the process, since the information is often political. There should be ways to share the contentious findings early in the process
- Communication for a) accountability and b) learning purposes could be dealt with separately. This may allow learning to take place in spite of the difficulties that arise from publishing politically sensitive information
- Evaluation can be viewed as a continuous process of informing strategic thinking rather than a procedure of accountability. Will a theory-based approach in evaluations enable learning from evaluations?
- The theory based approach is fine for a perfect world but is the world ready for it? There was considerable scepticism on this front
- What difference does using this model with respect to climate change bring about?

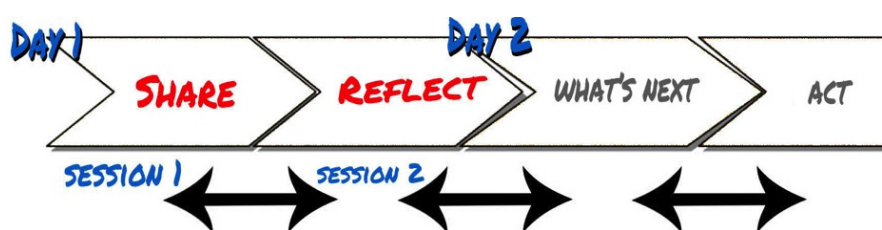
Reflections on an Evaluation Results approach:

- We need a study to understand what it is about this approach that is effective for climate change policy
- Given the difficulties of working in the real world (limited budgets, politics, conflicts), does this model work for climate change policy?
- Policy makers receive conflicting reports from evaluation organisations; how do we deal with this?
- What scientific evidence concerning climate change does this model require at a process level?
- In the face of climate change and evaluation where both depend on political acceptance, is there enough attention given to linking with policy makers and informing change? What would be the ways to strengthen evaluation? What has been learnt since Michael Bamberger’s contribution to the ‘Bridging the gap’ publication on evidence-based policy making?

Webinars connecting with broader evaluation communities of practice

Learning theme three took the opportunity, the day after the knowledge exchange, to share and discuss the outcomes with a broader group of actors working on climate change and to explore how these might inform policy. This discussion was held through the medium of two webinars, connecting to two different communities (<http://www.climate-eval.org/>), Climate-Eval and (<http://www.seachangecop.org/>) Sea Change CoP. Webinar 1 focussed on climate adaptation and resilience, while Webinar 2 focussed on climate mitigation and was informed by the Q&A session of the first webinar taking place earlier. The panel was assembled during the knowledge exchange, and included a mix of M&E and learning experts, in particular from the theme on knowledge brokers. This reflected the fact that during the knowledge exchange, it had become increasingly evident that evaluators can be seen as key knowledge brokers and intermediaries. Evaluators have much to offer in this area and much to learn about how to do evaluation in ways which serve boundary functions, such as linking different actors and processes within the cycle of policy and practice, and which increase both the scope of and the space available for learning from success and failure alike.

Learning Theme 4: Extreme Events and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR): What are we not learning?



This learning theme started from the observation that many people in developing countries do not give priority to risks of disaster, even when they are aware of or have experienced extreme events, or have predicted they will affect them. This is reasonably well known, and yet DRR agencies and disaster managers consistently expect that people will actively seek to reduce their exposure to extreme events and plan their work accordingly. The theme sought to explore the factors which explained why the disaster risk reduction community was not learning from actual behaviour in disaster situations and to discuss the options for allowing such learning to happen in future.

During the first session the whole theme had a dialogue in order to assess where DRR is currently and to identify what can be done to address the learning gap in order to improve risk reduction policy and practice.

For the second session on day one, the theme split up into three groups. Each group formulated a scenario in which disaster risk reduction policy and practice would be more responsive to actual behaviour in the face of real or potential disasters, including a concrete set of goals to be achieved within a specific time frame. They then participated in a back casting to present exercise in order to work out which steps would be required to achieve the goals they had set out previously. The groups then reconvened to share what they had learned.

Summary of Outcomes of First Session

Reasons for the learning gap

- People are willing to trade off long term risk in order to benefit from the livelihoods offered by disaster prone areas
- There are cultural differences when assessing risk, especially when dealing with indigenous peoples whose perception of disasters is integral to their cultural existence
- Differing levels of access to resources and security means that for some, the risk of exposure to hazards is well justified if it is perceived as necessary to maintaining a better quality of life
- Religious beliefs play a large role in how different cultures deal with risk through notions of divine punishment, fatalism and predestination

- The lack of cross communication between researchers, communities and development actors contributes, ultimately, to the knowledge gap between DRR organisations and the people they are trying to help

What to do about the learning gap in the long term

- Educating donors on the need for prevention is important
- Risk resilience should be more thoroughly considered in long-term development goals and decision-making.
- Actors in DRR policy need to lobby for long-term funding in case of political instability
- There needs to be more technical training for communities in order to empower them and their knowledge
- DRR needs to address the power relations and political interests that conflict with risk reduction to assess when stakeholders are being more of a hindrance than a help

Tools for addressing the learning gap

- DRR needs adaptable approaches that are more responsive to the highly diverse contexts in which they operate
- The Participatory Vulnerability Climate Assessment is beneficial in identifying people's perception of risk
- Global assessment reports can be used to identify risk

Breakout group 1

Breakout group 1 chose the period from 2017 to 2013. In the future state of 2017, the organisation has achieved communities' empowerment, knowledge and learning regarding DRR in Honduras. Their actions have created an enabling environment that promotes collaboration among decision-makers, NGOs and communities. They then moved backwards in time to the current situation in 2013, indicating activities carried out and conditions in each prevailing year.

2017 - All empowerment policy processes for sustainability assessed and reviewed

2016 – Implementing partnerships that are needed for study are established

2015 - Implement capacity building on high-level advocacy, (regional and local government) with mid- term review guided by community organisations most affected by climate change

2014 – Facilitation and connection, protecting community action plans, working with technical experts

2013- Conduct participatory vulnerability climate assessments (PVCAs), meeting with partners advocating for participatory approaches, systems analysis, scenario planning, using technical sectoral experts and developing actions plan with M&E systems

Breakout group 2

Breakout group 2 chose the time period 2018 to 2013. The location was based on a case study in the Philippines which aims to promote the development of communities' resilience at the national level. They then moved back in time to the current year of 2013, indicating each step in the preceding year of what was done to achieve the future objective in 2018

2018 - Decision-making processes are informed by the needs of communities affected by climate change priorities and past learning

2016 - Institutional mechanisms (transparency, accountability monitoring, etc...) to review planning and investments in place; technical assistance to establish the impacts on community resilience – independent of government

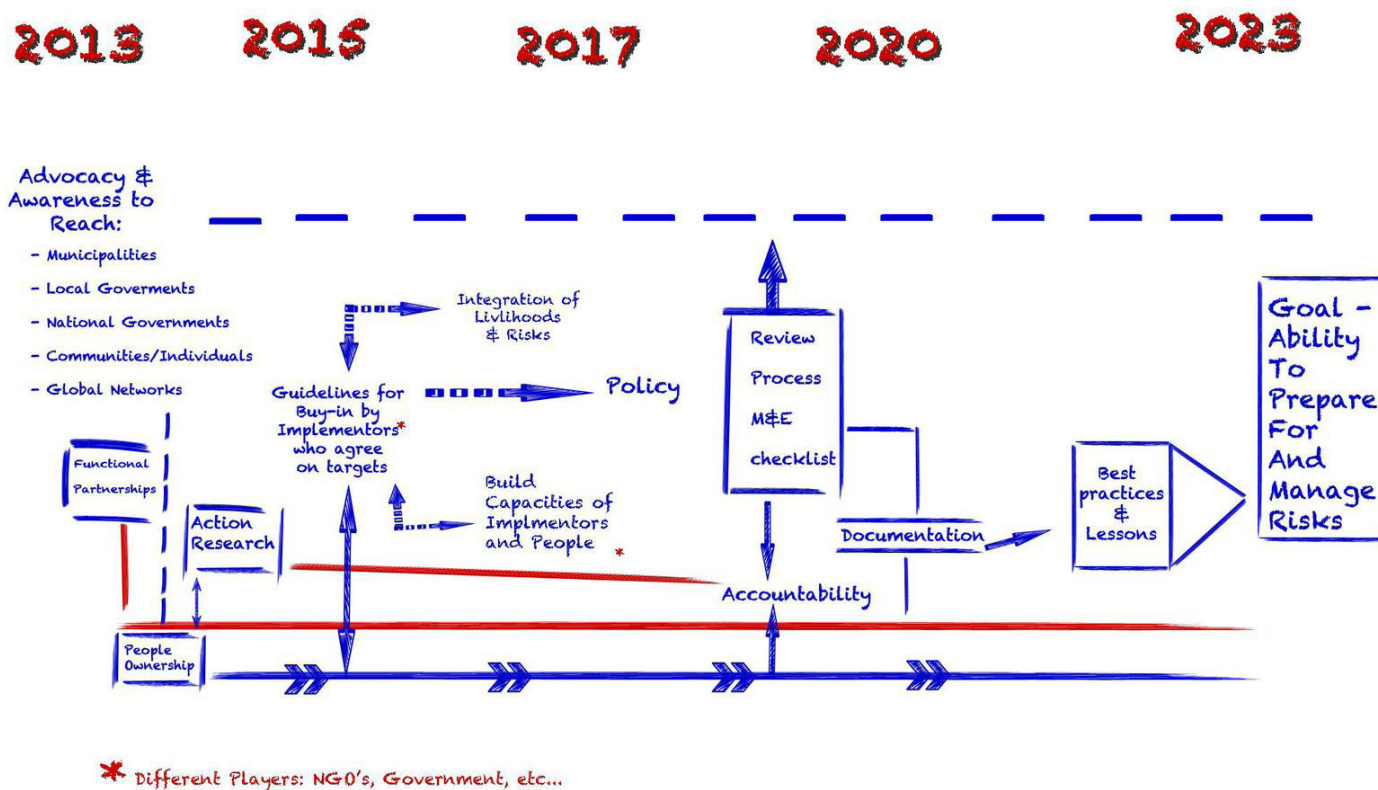
2015 - Broad based lobbying (academic, business, citizens and donors) to educate and build consensus for independent mechanisms in the Philippines. In this process political champions are created, using technological assistance to establish it

2014 - Learning from failure or success has been studied, evidenced and turned into a national issue that convenes the lobby. Create the capacity to translate and communicate a research agenda into a political issue

2013 - Ready to act in response to big disasters by having relationships with key partners for learning in place (media, research, NGO, community groups and rapporteurs)

Breakout group 3

Breakout group 3 chose the time frame from 2023 to 2013. The future aim was to ensure conditions that have empowered communities to prepare and manage risks. See diagram.



Plenary Sessions: Common Insights Across Themes & Commitments Made

There were a series of plenaries in which all the learning themes joined collectively to report and reflect on their respective breakout discussions, with a view to offering opportunities for learning across the themes. The aim of the first day's plenary sessions was to share and prompt discussion, and yielded the following insights.

First, all of the themes independently brought up the necessity of reconciling the gap between locally held knowledge and organisations involved in making climate change policy. It is agreed across the board that local knowledge is not given enough sway in climate change policy and that policy makers have difficulty gaining grassroots support. This has been, in part, attributed to a lack of structures or filters in upward communication channels from the local to the national level. Further investment is needed to allow these local communities to effectively present their knowledge in the global debate. Changes are also required to the process through which decisions on climate policy are made. Making it more responsive to locally-held knowledge and the broader context from which it has emerged could increase its efficacy as well as its legitimacy.

Second, the themes also highlighted the unpredictable nature of both climate change and the policy process. The difficulties of accurately predicting the consequences of climate change generate fundamental uncertainty for policy processes; and yet the very questionable political commitment to dealing with climate change likewise generates uncertainties which can undermine the capacity, and the will, to respond. No theme had a cast-iron answer for this conundrum but there was agreement that flexible ways of working and 'no regrets' policies were one potential way to deal with uncertainty.

Third, power relations surfaces across the learning themes. For instance, in the 'whose knowledge counts' and 'brokers and intermediaries' themes, the concern with power related to the need to ensure that the knowledge of those most affected by climate change is represented in climate policy. Part of this is representing locally held knowledge in university teaching and research in order to increase awareness. In the 'evaluation and learning' theme, concerns over the suppression of contentious findings were bound up with an awareness of who had power to control access to information.

Fourth, both the knowledge brokers and evaluation themes brought up accountability as being very important to the process. Brokers and evaluators need to be held accountable for their successes and failures in order to learn from mistakes and improve successes. There is also the question of the accountability of the people that brokers and evaluators work with, or indeed for.

Fifth, there was general support for one of the 'pre-conditions for learning' that informed the knowledge exchange itself, namely that climate policy can be more effective and legitimate if we view failure as a stepping-stone towards something better. This was particularly evident within the 'learning and evaluation' theme, who cited an Einstein maxim: 'In order to succeed I try to fail as fast as I can'.

Sixth, and finally, the participants all agreed that climate change policy has stalled and that more investment and new approaches are needed in order to prevent climate change from spiralling out of control. Rob van den Berg of the Global Environment facility, opened a plenary session by reminding us what, ultimately, we should be trying to work towards, explaining what might be termed the 'cure-to-damage ratio'. There may be uncertainty in the figures, but they are illustrative of the respective priorities given to doing something about climate change and supporting a 'business as usual' economic model which is highly carbon-intensive. It is not enough to talk of green growth or low carbon development if our behaviour remains the same. Ultimately, whether through knowledge exchanges like this or through international political processes, we need to learn how to give ourselves the spaces and opportunities to change this behaviour.

On the second day, plenary sessions were designed to encourage participants to move from learning to action, and to commit themselves to acting differently in their roles within climate change policy processes. Participants had, on the morning of the second day, split off into themes and reflected upon what they had decided they would do differently in the second session and recorded these actions on posters. They wrote up what they would personally do differently after the learning experience, as well as what they intended to change on the organisational level. Each group made intra-theme commitments to action and put these on a wall to share with the other themes and to discuss in plenary.

From Learning to Action, a Market Place of Commitments

Individual commitments

- Post workshop meeting to take forward the research agenda for 'whose knowledge' (Andy Newsham)
- Go back to our work, find out what the knowledge filter looks like and identify what a different filter might look like? (Agnes Otzelberger CARE)
- I will become more active in existing disaster risk reduction, knowledge management & climate change adaptation networks: to share experience, listen and learn, feedback to organisations (Sarah Wade-Apicella)
- Be a personal champion for more effective communication of evaluation learning. Building the ambitions and capacity of evaluators to be change agents. (Geoff Barnard)
- To follow up with identified partners in livelihoods integration to DRR and also evaluation knowledge sharing topic relevant to my everyday work. (Sarah Wade Apicella)

Organisational commitments

- Work with other interested parties to pioneer / test out better approaches to capturing and sharing learning with a view to influencing change & action . (Geoff Barnard & Sarah Wade-Apicella)
- Look across the disaster risk reduction portfolio of CDKN to identify the systemic constraints to change being adapted and find models for overcoming → Learning and innovation hub (already being planned)
- Develop theory of change for CDKN's disaster risk reduction 'vision' for India through 'back-step' exercise to inform future programming
- CDKN to offer Theory of Change training and training for Theory of Change facilitator for country programmes, suppliers and evaluators
- CDKN to write short practical papers on effective programmes on thematic areas including domains of change (indicators, methods for gathering information)
- In my organisation, UNISDR, I will advocate for organisation-wide increased participation in DRR, CC and development networks global <--> local (Sarah Wade-Apicella).
- UNISDR, can/should build in reflection, evaluation and distil lessons learnt to share internally, then externally, to strengthen cross-linked disaster risk reduction, climate change and development processes (global and local)
- Look across DRR portfolio in Asia on how knowledge is transferred and where assumptions are being imposed (CDKN)
- Apply the Theory of Change approach to CDKN Africa country portfolio learning & evaluation
- CDKN to develop theories of change and change pathways for thematic areas and share these
- I will work within my organisation to lead greater reflection on how we privilege and broker certain types of knowledge over others. -Blane Harvey, IDRC
- Need for new generation of evaluations (focus on learning, include new criteria) and new methods (GEF-EO)
- Develop short practical guides e.g. resilience, Theory of Change / indicators and methods (GEF-EO)
- Link up learning and communication (GEF-EO)

- Recognising the risk of knowledge brokerage using ‘extracted’ info from research subjects and conducting elite conversations - see what can be done to broaden knowledge exchange and diversify conversations through clearer language (Knowledge Broker learning theme)
- Link knowledge brokers with power brokers concept – nuance the role of intermediary (Knowledge Broker Learning Theme)
- Individually and collectively talk about ethics of knowledge brokerage.

Analysis and Reflections – how social was our learning?

The knowledge exchange was a space to share not just what we know, but how and why we know, individually and collectively, what we do about climate change policy. This section offers insights and reflections on the outcomes of the event and the strengths and weaknesses of the learning processes that led to these. Whilst the event was well-received and very fruitful on a number of levels, we do not wish to present it as an unmitigated success. There were some fundamental objectives that it set out to, but did not achieve, principally around the transformative elements of social learning but also around encouraging more collaborations across the learning themes. The objective here is to make the space to be honest about the failings as well as the achievements. It can be difficult to maintain this space because of the pressures of delivery and complying with what is required of climate and development intervention. Yet it is important to do so if we are going to give ourselves the opportunity to learn from what went wrong.

The format

The knowledge exchange employed an experimental format which aimed both to be goal-oriented and to document the social learning that was occurring as the event unfolded. The participants were selected by learning theme convenors because of the experience and expertise they were able to bring to the question or problem their particular theme had chosen to address. This was why so much of the event was set aside for concentrated breakout sessions. However, partly owing to the differences between the themes, many participants were attracted to the event because they appreciated the opportunity to share and reflect with people they may not otherwise encounter. For example, evaluation experts might not normally have had the chance to meet people from the knowledge brokers and intermediaries sector. To some extent, then, this was a space to build bridges between sectors. This space was created both through the social learning workshop process, but also in the informal moments between workshops where discussions continued.

However, whilst there may have been many interactions between participants across learning themes during the refreshment and lunch breaks, there was less in the way of coordinated links made between the learning themes per se. For instance, it was clear that questions relating to evaluation could arise in relation, for instance, to the ‘whose knowledge counts’ theme, or for the disaster risk reduction theme, but the plenary sessions did not spark these discussions to any great extent. There were some significant exceptions. For instance, Rob van den Berg, co-convenor for the ‘evaluation’ learning theme, had something of a ‘eureka moment’ when he realised that evaluators were also knowledge brokers. This sharpened his interest considerably to deal with the ‘brokers and intermediaries’ theme. Nevertheless, few other participants appeared to have had a similar experience.

Perhaps, despite similarities in some respects, the learning themes were in other ways too different to coalesce, and too focussed on problems that other learning themes might not be any better placed to resolve. On reflection with facilitators, however, we concluded that the likelier reason for the low levels of cross-theme interaction arose because the event did not quite strike the right balance between plenary and breakout sessions. If a future event were to use this format, we would recommend doing it over three, not two, days.

What we did and didn’t learn, collectively and individually

Social learning is a process which requires time. It became clear during the workshop that two days was not enough to complete the triple-loop learning process. Triple-loop learning is a slow process. It requires us to question our own assumptions, how these affect others and our ways of working, so as to be

able to gauge the extent to which transformative change is necessary, and what it would look like. At the same time, it also requires us to build the relationships that would bring about the collective behaviour that is a precondition for transformative change. This task might be achieved in a lifetime, but very little progress could be made towards it in a single event. Therefore, events such as this can hope to just begin or continue a process of Social Learning, rather than complete one in two days.

Although transformative learning did not occur, the event generated a good deal of single loop and double loop learning through the activities, discussions and reflections. This instrumental and communicative learning led to a new understanding of what has happened in the past, the current reality of climate change policy in the present and actions that participants could take to impact the future.

The organisation and facilitation of the event was praised by participants, 'I really enjoyed the two days. I thought they were well facilitated with a good mix between discussions that were more guided and those that were more freestyle' (Lindsay Stringer).

Many participants commented on the importance of open spaces, such as this event, in which multiple views on knowledge could be voiced and shared. Angelica Ospina reflects, 'I also appreciated the opportunity to re-think what we are doing in our organisations that is centred around knowledge brokers, and to think of those industries or institutions that help us access and interpret information in policy processes, and try to understand what those brokers do.' This focus on 'knowledge brokers' and the responsibilities and assumptions implicit in such roles was a valuable focus during the event.

Furthermore, there was value in introducing the social learning model as a lens and methodology to a wider audience. The event encouraged participants to go back to their organisations and agencies and implement similar learning processes, where more time can be given to deeper learning for transformative actions.

Conclusions and recommendations

Knowledge exchange as 'stepping stone', not end point?

In the closing address, Andy Newsham suggested that his experience of the knowledge exchange had not been one of learning many 'new things'. It had been more about realising that even when the problems – such as climate change – are new, we often already know how to respond, or have the resources to formulate a robust response. Even with our knowledge and resources, our response often falls short of what is required. It is this observation which brings us full circle, to a key premise underlying this event. We need to learn differently, not more, if we are to act differently. Understanding what social learning has to offer is key to doing this.

As with any event, this was a learning experience for the organisers and collaborators who agreed that the exchange might better be seen as part of a longer social learning process, rather than a stand-alone cycle. Ultimately, we got as far as using social learning as a lens for thinking about a knowledge exchange. As one of the facilitators, Ewen LeBorgne, writes, 'Workshops are just stepping stones towards a more coherent plan and future; they're also bridges among worldviews; and they are wonderful opportunities to network or gel teams. That is already extraordinary and certainly most helpful in complex initiatives.' Whilst, then, there was not enough time to reach the third, transformative stage of triple-loop learning, the event was a good starting point which offered lessons for the future.

Looked at in this way, the knowledge exchange becomes a 'mini-lab' to explore and then catalyse further social learning processes. Organisers as well as participants received valuable feedback on how to continue the process they began, keeping up the connections made during this event and ensuring that other events like it happen. They also began to address the particular problems of the working environments of participants and to build on the discoveries made at the knowledge exchange. As such, the event offered a framework for other development professionals in other arenas to create and implement similar events, as a way not just to learn, but to start to build learning alliances for change.

Five recommendations for future events:

- 1. Don't rush! Two days is too little time for this kind of process. If a future event were to use this format, we would recommend doing it over three, not two, days.**
- 2. Focus more attention not just on setting up the rationale for each learning theme (the main focus of our event preparations), but getting the conversation going early between theme convenors on what the points of convergence are between themes. This would make it easier to structure plenary sessions around cross-theme interactions.**
- 3. Set out with realistic expectations about how much social learning can be done within the space of one workshop**
- 4. Start the discussion with all event participants earlier, through blogs, online sharing and debate platforms: whet the appetite! Ideally, each theme might come to the event with a provisional consensus not just on the issue but on what to do about it**
- 5. Invite fewer people: goal-oriented processes work better with smaller, more focussed groups.**
- 6. Don't include new people on a second day or even second day afternoon when you want a process that runs through a workshop. This happened in 'whose knowledge counts' theme and it changed both the dynamic and the objective of the session.**

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