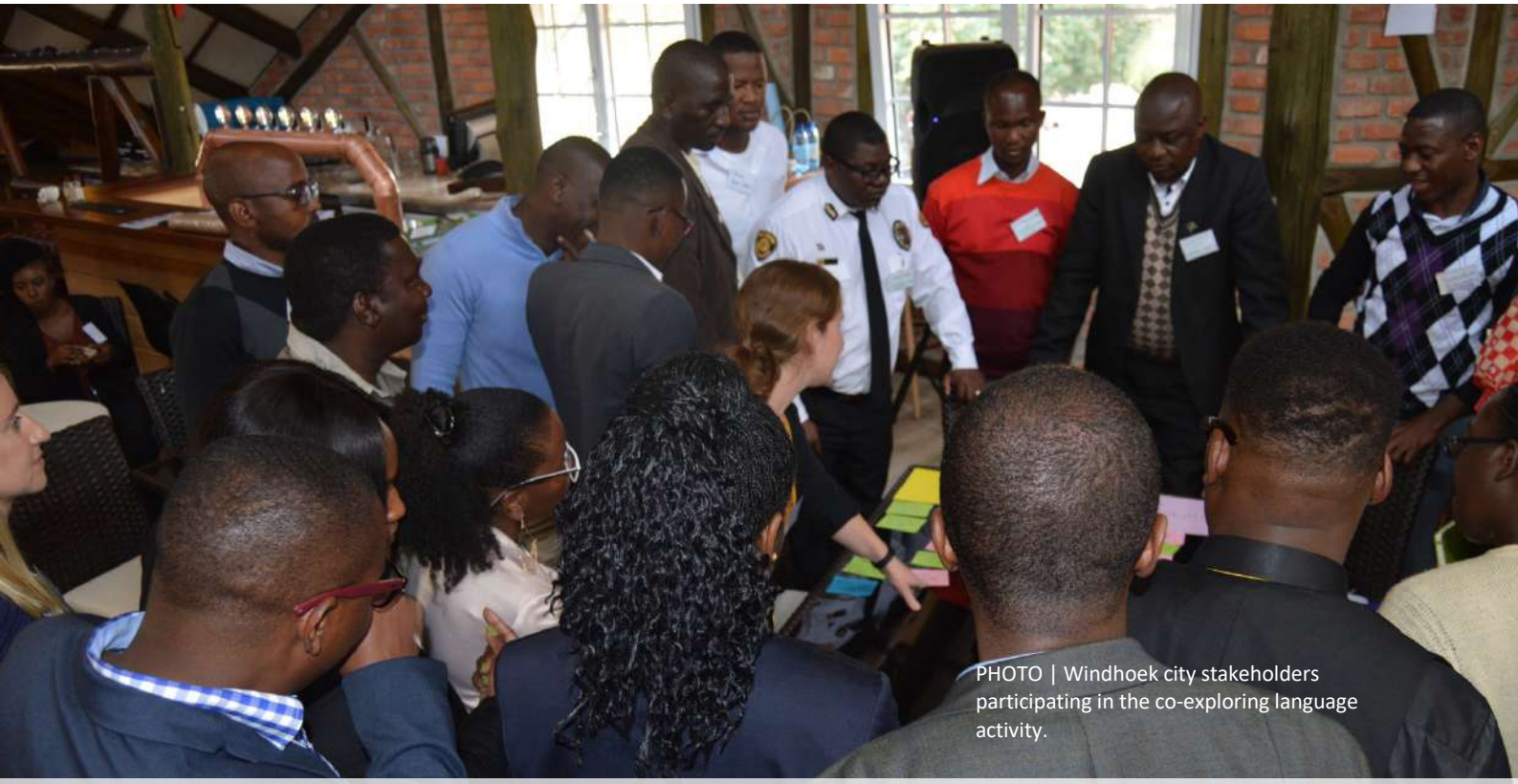

PHOTO | Windhoek city stakeholders participating in the co-exploring language activity.

Explainer
CO-EXPLORING TERMINOLOGIES

This brief:

- Explains why co-exploring language and terminology is important for creating a level playing field at the beginning of a multi-stakeholder engagement.
- Outlines how to use a simple exercise to co-explore climate-related language in a workshop.
- Provides an overview of situations in which this activity can prove helpful.
- Offers a case study from Windhoek, Namibia, that shows what the activity can achieve.

WHY CO-EXPLORE TERMINOLOGIES?

Terminology can be a barrier to understanding climate change, and to taking action. People who have limited interdisciplinary experience can easily misunderstand a number of terms, such as weather, climate, adaptation, mitigation, sustainable development, and disaster risk reduction.

A "level playing field" of knowledge about basic climate-related terminology among all participants sets the stage for more in-depth co-exploration and co-production ("transdisciplinary knowledge integration") to support adaptation decision-making.

THE ACTIVITY

This co-exploration exercise **introduces climate, adaptation, disaster risk reduction and development concepts** to workshop participants.

Participants **discuss concepts with one another to identify key differences:** 1) between weather and climate, and 2) between development, adaptation, mitigation, and disaster risk reduction. Participants receive a series of written statements/actions (such as, "Today it is raining"). They must then cooperatively decide to which concept the statement/action belongs.

The facilitator then **explains the meaning of the different concepts** and statements/actions. Using this new information, participants then rearrange the statements/actions linked to each concept accordingly, and discuss what they have learned.

PHOTOS | Left: Dialogue participants in Lusaka explore the meaning of different concepts and discuss how they have placed their statements/actions.

Right: Using questions as prompts for discussions during workshop breaks.

THE BENEFITS

The activity breaks the ice at the start of a workshop, giving participants who may not know one another a chance to interact.

A game offers a non-threatening way to give participants the opportunity to share thoughts, and to address potential sources of confusion or misunderstanding.

The activity encourages conversation about key issues and sets the stage for deeper discussions.

This activity is useful when...

- ✓ You believe that climate science and climate-related terms are misused and/or misunderstood in a given context. (A lack of climate change awareness or action may be a symptom of this.)
- ✓ You are beginning a workshop or engagement, or you want to provide an introductory exercise for other climate-related activities. (The exercise creates a shared understanding, which acts as a foundation for further co-exploration of climate and adaptation issues.)
- ✓ You believe that the participants have different types and levels of knowledge.
- ✓ You want to open up dialogue among a group.
- ✓ You want to improve the ability of decision-makers and other stakeholders to articulate climate-information needs.

This activity can...

- ✓ Raise awareness about climate change.
- ✓ Clarify meanings of climate-related terms that are often misunderstood and misused.
- ✓ Unpack the meaning of “climate information”.
- ✓ Increase receptivity to climate science and information and opportunities for its use.
- ✓ Create a “level playing field” of knowledge of basic terminology among all participants.
- ✓ Establish a foundation for further co-exploration.
- ✓ Break the ice among participants who don’t know one another.
- ✓ Provide peer-to-peer sharing and learning in a safe space.
- ✓ Give all participants opportunities to contribute.
- ✓ Raise awareness of the co-benefits from mitigation, adaptation, sustainable development, and disaster risk reduction.

PHOTOS | Left: Windhoek city stakeholders explore different climate scenarios as they work to develop the city's first Integrated Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.

Right: Participants in Windhoek Learning Lab consider different sources of climate information.

A direct request from Windhoek city stakeholders seeking to co-develop the city's first Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan led to the development of this activity to address misunderstanding about climate-related terms that had previously surfaced.

Discussions led to greater awareness of:

- Changing rainfall patterns, and effects on farming practices.
- The potential misunderstanding that can arise from different meanings attached to the same concept. For example, mitigation can mean reducing the impact of flooding (mitigating climate risk) or reducing greenhouse gas emissions (mitigating climate change).
- The reasons for uncertainties about future climate projections. Projections from different climate models produce different results.
- The need for a change of mindset, away from working in silos towards a transdisciplinary approach. For example, isolated mitigation or adaptation projects often benefit from holistic evaluation of measures that offer potential to support both.
- The co-benefits of some strategies and actions. For example, planting trees sequesters carbon (climate change mitigation); reduces flooding impacts (disaster risk reduction/ adaptation); and moderates local temperatures and minimises soil degradation (adaptation).

FURTHER RESOURCES

Further resources for this activity are available at https://www.weadapt.org/knowledge-base/co-exploring-terminology

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