

Knowledge Brokering from the Global South

Mobilising knowledge for climate advocacy



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Introduction

It is increasingly acknowledged that climate action needs to go ‘beyond technical fixes’ based on Western knowledge and technological expertise and centre the lived experiences, knowledge, and values of societies in the Global South, who, despite having least contributed to climate change, face the most significant climate injustices. Within climate change discourse, local communities are no longer just seen as ‘victims’, but are recognised as holders of innovative and locally-led solutions for climate change within their contexts. In light of this, within the global climate change arena, we see more and more a push to advocate for locally-led climate action and solutions.

Knowledge brokering can be an important strategy in climate advocacy, bringing indigenous, traditional and local perspectives on climate change into decision-making and amplifying the voices of marginalised communities to change policy and practice. However, existing research mostly takes a Northern perspective and insights about the role of knowledge brokering for climate advocacy and the related challenges for organisations brokering knowledge in the Global South are still under-researched. **This insight paper aims to shed light on the opportunities and barriers for civil society organisations (CSOs) in the Global South by sharing the latest insights from research and practice.**

By building on the experience and expertise of key knowledge partners in the [Voices for Just Climate Action \(VCA\)](#) programme, this insight paper presents some of the important lessons learned and knowledge questions and gaps in this field.

Mobilising knowledge within the VCA programme

Voices for Just Climate Action (VCA) is a lobby and advocacy programme implemented by a global alliance including SouthSouthNorth (SSN) the [World Wide Fund for Nature](#) (WWF) Netherlands, [Akina Mama wa Afrika](#) (AMwA), [Slum Dwellers International](#) (SDI), [Fundación Avina](#) and [Hivos](#), under the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs five-year strategic partnership: “Power of Voices”. The VCA programme aims to ensure that by 2025, local civil society and underrepresented groups will have taken on a central role as creators, facilitators, and advocates of innovative and inclusive climate solutions. Their inclusion is crucial for effective and lasting climate responses. The programme’s overall approach is to work with civil society to build widespread societal support for locally shaped climate solutions through an inclusive and rights-based approach. Finally, through a climate justice approach, the programme intends to see an expanded civic space where civil society voices, particularly indigenous and marginalised people, are heard on climate action. The VCA programme is being implemented in 7 countries, including Tunisia, Kenya, Zambia, Bolivia, Paraguay, Brazil and Indonesia.

In the VCA alliance, knowledge plays a key role in advocacy. The programme partners are committed to including marginalised knowledge and amplifying diverse voices addressing climate challenges. The program aims to actively strengthen the capacity to utilise knowledge mobilisation to foster a shared understanding and the use of diverse knowledge for climate justice. VCA local partners include over 200 local civil society organisations, many of whom are actively involved in building knowledge and knowledge

partnerships that advance locally-led climate justice. One of VCA’s core objectives is to mutually strengthen the ability to capacitate and learn from these partnerships.

A mutual learning journey

In 2023, The Broker and SouthSouthNorth teamed up to facilitate a mutual learning journey with Southern-based VCA knowledge partners to collectively explore the concept of knowledge-based advocacy and share experiences, successes and challenges in using knowledge for advocacy. The main objective of the learning journey is to build a shared understanding and unpack how individually and collectively VCA can create, use and share diverse forms of knowledge to influence change, both for greater epistemic justice and climate justice. This work aims to support VCA in building knowledge partnerships that advance locally-led climate action.

Through the Alliance, SouthSouthNorth aims to support the generation, dissemination and brokering of information, drawing on a network of experts and practitioners and strengthening partners’ capability to enable them to respond innovatively to the challenges and opportunities that climate change presents. In collaboration with local partners, SSN aims to guide and support partners and Alliance members in their brokering activities, providing advice, resources and sharing of lessons.

The main question guiding this learning journey was: ***How to co-create, use and share diverse forms of knowledge to make advocacy more effective and equitable for greater epistemic and climate justice?***

| Terminology | |
|-------------------|--|
| Climate justice | The concept of climate justice is a term used to frame climate change as an ethical and political issue, rather than one that is purely environmental or physical in nature. This is done by relating the effects of climate change to concepts of justice, particularly environmental justice and social justice and by examining issues such as equality, human rights, collective rights, and the historical responsibilities for climate change. |
| Epistemic justice | Epistemic justice is about making things fair in the way we handle knowledge and communication. It is about ensuring that everyone's voices and experiences, especially those of marginalised groups, are heard and taken seriously. It is about creating a level playing field where everyone has an equal chance to contribute to knowledge and be treated fairly in conversations and discussions. (Cummings et al., 2023) |

Approach to the short read

To gain a deeper understanding of knowledge brokering and advocacy in the context of climate justice, this short read presents a synthesis of relevant resources from academic and grey literature and connects these to knowledge questions, best practices and challenges identified by VCA knowledge partners from Paraguay, Brazil, Kenya, Indonesia and South Africa in the online learning session.

This short read consists of three interrelated parts; 1) insights from research, 2) insights from practice, and 3) a future learning journey. The annex includes an annotated bibliography providing relevant resources on knowledge brokering for advocacy for further reading.

PART 1: Insights from research

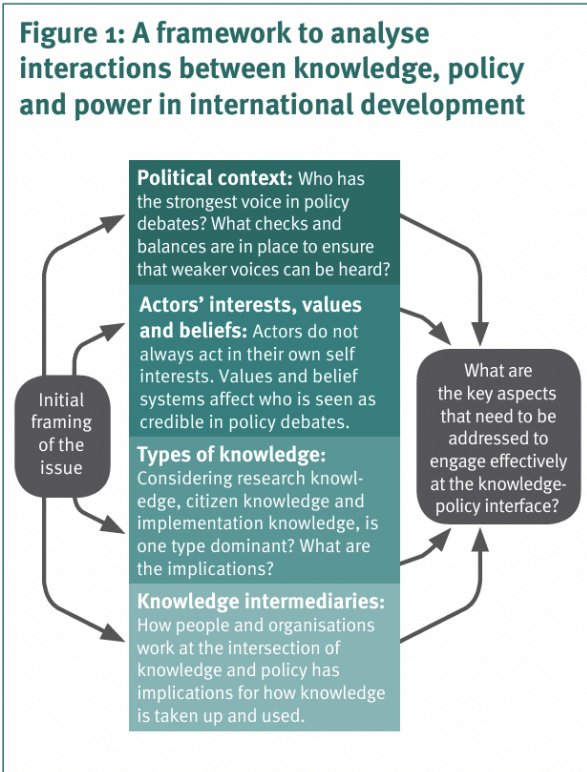
In the learning session, a number of different questions emerged which touched upon the conceptualisation of knowledge brokering for advocacy and the practice of knowledge mobilisation for evidence-based advocacy. Related questions around inclusivity and power dynamics involved in knowledge production, translation and usage were brought forward linking the concepts of climate justice and epistemic justice. In this section, we highlight four main knowledge questions which we explore with insights from literature. Additional relevant resources are presented in the annotated bibliography in the Annex to this paper.

1. What is knowledge brokering for climate advocacy?

Research literature commonly defines knowledge brokering as the process of moving knowledge into action, where knowledge brokers link different knowledge holders ('producers' of knowledge) and decision-makers ('users' of knowledge) to facilitate the generation, dissemination and eventual use of that knowledge. **Knowledge brokering is a dynamic and iterative process centred on facilitating the exchange, co-creation, and application of knowledge among diverse stakeholders (Al Busaidy et al., 2023).** While emphasising the collaborative nature of knowledge, it goes beyond traditional knowledge dissemination and translation. A knowledge broker not only communicates credible and relevant knowledge outputs, but actively engages in shaping broader decision-making, governance, cultural, and political contexts, (Scodanibbio et al., 2023). In this role, the knowledge broker acts as a facilitator of change, navigating complexities, contested issues, and diverse stakeholder goals to ensure evidence-based decisions are implemented effectively.

Knowledge brokering has often been defined as an impartial role, an honest broker or neutral intermediary who provides unbiased advice based on the available research, and this characteristic is what differentiates it from lobbying and advocacy (Bednarek et al, 2015; Pielke, 2007). However as the concept of knowledge brokering has evolved, there is greater recognition that knowledge brokering is not neutral or value-free (Bandola-Gill & Lyall, 2017). The relationship between knowledge and decision-making, particularly in policy making, is inherently political and involves many power dynamics (see Figure 1). When working in contexts with power imbalances and social injustice, including in the production and use of knowledge

itself, the blurry distinction between knowledge brokering and advocacy becomes untenable (Cummings et al, 2023; Juntti et al, 2009; Bandola-Gill & Lyall, 2017).



Source: Jones et. al. (2013). *Knowledge, policy and power in international development: A practical framework for improving policy.* Background Note. ODI. <https://odi.org/documents/3942/8201.pdf>

This evolving understanding of the political and power dynamics involved in the work of knowledge brokering also highlights the growing complexity of the role of knowledge brokers. They may need to navigate a more complex landscape where the traditional notion of impartiality may be difficult to maintain. They also need greater awareness of the political nature of decision-making processes and acknowledge that their activities may carry advocacy elements, even if their intention is to provide evidence-based and unbiased information.

Given the political nature of climate change and its related impacts, climate advocacy is a key strategy that civil society organisations (CSOs) employ to facilitate change. Climate advocacy necessarily often entails a number of the same activities and approaches associated with knowledge brokering. CSOs often work in partnership to strengthen their claims and amplify their voices, drawing on various forms of knowledge to influence decision-makers to combat structural causes of inequality and injustice (Van Wessel, 2018). Climate advocacy is aimed at driving transformative change processes and addressing challenges such as limited political will, competing priorities, social injustices and inequality, bureaucracy, and information asymmetries to encourage climate action in the pursuit of a more resilient and just society.

A growing awareness of different ways of knowing in a plurivers of knowledges is also reflected in recent, revised, definitions of knowledge brokering- not as an end in itself but as a process (Cummings et al. 2019).

Adelle et al. (2019), for example, define knowledge brokering as the “*collaborative process of bringing together a plurality of knowledge sources to address a defined problem*”. In this respect, knowledge brokering can be seen as a journey, in which diverse actors jointly move through an informed process to achieve desired impact.

2. Which knowledge brokering strategies are used in climate advocacy?

When it comes to mobilising knowledge for climate action, knowledge brokers provide an essential role in creating, facilitating, and fostering links between different knowledge holders and decision-makers. Climate knowledge brokers do this through a number of activities and interlinked processes. Below are three categories of activities adapted from Ward et al. (2009), including ‘knowledge management and dissemination’, ‘linkage and exchange’ and ‘capacity strengthening’ approaches. Aspects from each type of activity are often used together, depending on the challenges brokers aim to overcome in their context.

1. Knowledge management and dissemination

These are activities aimed at improving the accessibility of knowledge, often in the face of an overwhelming quantity and/or inaccessible formats. Activities might include packaging, translating, sharing, promoting and commissioning knowledge. Dissemination strategies are tailored to particular audiences. Brokers might focus on situating the available knowledge in the context of ongoing or emerging policy processes, and assessing who is involved in the process and how. Brokers might use story circles and other techniques for drawing out and sharing tacit, experiential knowledge among different actors. Horizon-scanning activities involve brokers looking forwards to upcoming issues on the agenda, and opportunities to amplify relevant knowledge (Bielak et al., 2008; Rose et al., 2020). In the information overload decision-makers face, brokers work on identifying when and where to reach key actors and with what type of information.

2. Linkage and exchange

These activities focus more directly on strengthening the relationships between brokers, knowledge holders and decision makers and/or creating and supporting relationships between different groups of actors. Building direct relationships can also mean becoming a trusted go-to source on a wide range of information (Bielak et al., 2008). Creating and strengthening communities of practice (CoP) is an often used strategy by brokers to strengthen knowledge sharing, capacity strengthening and relationships between different actors working on a common area of interest. CoPs often involve regular engagement among a group of actors to create shared knowledge, e.g. share best practice around a particular area of interest, including practical lessons on applying knowledge or insights towards a common goal or practice.

Sometimes brokers facilitate knowledge co-production processes, where a variety of different knowledge holders and decision-makers come together to co-produce new knowledge collaboratively. Or brokers may focus on connecting the needs of decision-makers to knowledge holders and researchers so that knowledge needs and gaps can be identified and addressed, and so that new research and knowledge better aligns with real world needs of decision-makers.

3. Capacity strengthening

These are activities aimed at building capacities of different stakeholders for accessing and applying knowledge, as well as accessing and influencing decision-making. Capacity strengthening also includes institutional capacity, such as supporting organisations to build expertise and resources to follow on-going policy processes or building institutional capacity within government departments to build better relationships with knowledge holders, better understand the process of knowledge generation and strengthen their internal evidence base. Activities can include interactive forms of peer-to-peer learning between different organisations and actors which can build both relationships and knowledge.

In climate advocacy these same strategies and approaches can be detected. As Scodanibbio et al. (2023) state: *“In the climate arena and more widely, there are many terms to describe activities within the ‘knowledge to action’ spectrum”*. These include, but are not limited to, knowledge sharing, research uptake, dissemination, knowledge exchange, outreach and communications, knowledge management, and knowledge translation. At the same time, roles such as matchmaking, facilitating, connecting, networking, and convening are central to climate advocacy. The success of these initiatives lies in the ability to bridge gaps, facilitate learning and empower communities, utilising the transformative potential of knowledge brokering.

3. What role do power dynamics play in knowledge brokering ?

Knowledge brokering strategies and partnerships do not develop in a vacuum. Rather, they are informed by cultural and relational dynamics, that include historically-informed hierarchies, and power asymmetries that characterise international development (Van der Graaf et al., 2021). Especially as brokers of knowledge, it is critical to think about and address questions of power associated with the production of knowledge and create space for Southern-based partners to work from their own contextual understandings and locally-defined knowledge questions (Lijfering et al., 2021). Effective knowledge brokering requires addressing complexities in navigating tensions and power dynamics among diverse actors to foster widespread ownership and mutuality. Getting from the source of knowledge to climate action involves a continuous and collaborative process of knowledge exchange, advocacy, and addressing power dynamics to create a foundation for meaningful and inclusive change. In this regard, the concept of a knowledge or evidence ecosystem could provide a useful framework for assessing the relational dynamics at play and addressing power asymmetries in a knowledge partnership. As (Stewart et al., 2019) define, an *“evidence ecosystem is a system reflecting the formal and informal linkages and interactions between different actors (and their capacities and resources) involved in the production, translation, and use of evidence”*.

Engaging as a knowledge broker in the evidence ecosystem requires a strategic approach that highlights meaningful participation, representation, and inclusion of diverse perspectives and experiences. The work of the knowledge broker is to create inclusive, safe spaces where all stakeholders can recognize and learn from the holders of many different types of knowledge (Scodanibbio et al., 2023).

Creating space for open and reflective discussions between different organisations in the partnership about what is needed to stimulate and support knowledge co-creation and mobilisation, is an important part of this process. Engaging with and listening to diverse actors by jointly exploring possibilities, understandings, and priorities within the knowledge ecosystem can not only build research engagement but also more general engagement and commitment in the partnership. Developing conversation starters which are rooted in the contextual realities and knowledge of the partners can form entry points for building connections (Lijfering et al., 2021).

4. What are good examples of knowledge brokering practices?

Through a collection of several case stories, Van Wessel et al., (2021) illustrate how evidence for advocacy is shaped by CSOs through careful reading and engagement with various stakeholders, seeking out possibilities, and managing risks in conditions where rules and roles may be unclear, ambiguous, or shifting. The chapter shows how evidence can be effectively used for advocacy by highlighting two different approaches. The first is a more activist approach, exemplified by Oxfam who uses 'killer facts' to provoke, draw attention and set agendas on issues related to their advocacy on economic inequality. Taking a more neutral stance, Hivos uses case studies as a vehicle for advocacy by presenting a problem and solution meant to inspire actors to act. In a similar vein, the African Child Policy Forum (ACPF) provides policy-relevant information and recommendations for policymakers through research and evidence synthesis. These examples illustrate how in knowledge brokering for advocacy, the boundaries between activist and knowledge provider roles can become fluid.

In addition to these general strategies, a number of case illustrations below provide more contextualised examples and learnings on strategies for knowledge brokering in climate advocacy.

Creating space for indigenous knowledge in Nepal

The South Asia Institute of Advanced Studies demonstrated the value of mobilising different types of knowledge to address water scarcity in Nepal. In this context, limited localised scientific data, such as historical data on rainfall, temperature and land-use patterns, was used as a reason to delay decision-making on addressing environmental issues. The institute gathered evidence from multiple knowledge systems through interviews, observation and the review of archival records and organised a series of participatory dialogues called Pani Chautari (loosely translated as 'water forum'). These efforts helped create decision-making processes for the local community to govern water. The process also helped address water-related conflicts in the region. *For more information about this case study [see here](#)*

Advancing Gender Equality in Climate Knowledge Brokering in India

Women's participation in the production of resilience plans in Gorakhpur, India, contributed substantially to impact and sustainability, including local committee functioning, access to potable water and the uptake of Climate Resilient Agriculture techniques. [The Gender Equality and Climate Compatible Development: Drivers and Challenges to People's Empowerment study](#) found that greater gender transformation came about when women were involved as agents rather than mere recipients, for example when spaces were

created for women to share their experiences and perspectives and to contribute to decision-making processes. *For more information about the case study [see here](#).*

Community-level capacity building and knowledge co-creation in South Africa

The SenseMaker project was launched to help a CSO in Cape Town provide stronger evidence for their discussions with the municipal authority. While the municipality aims for collaborative water governance, there's a challenge due to limited partnerships with civil society organisations and a history of neglect in low-income areas. The SenseMaker project, focusing on water-related issues in low-income urban areas, demonstrates the value of collaborative knowledge creation for transformative adaptation. The project uses a co-creation process to involve academics and activist researchers in various stages, leading to nuanced problem understanding. These engagements lead to fostering reciprocal learning and empowerment within the community organisation. The project thereby strengthened the legitimacy of individuals and the organisation, providing them with a valuable role in urban policy discussions. This case highlights the significance of co-creation in building local and sustainable capacity for transformative adaptation, emphasising the need for inclusive and long-term processes in addressing climate challenges. *For more information about the case study [see here](#).*

Co-creation of communication strategies in Colombia

Fondo Acción, an NGO in Colombia, employs diverse methods, such as community workshops, regional events, puzzles, songs, poems, manuals, and policy papers to foster a dynamic learning process within communities. The organisation also engages with other institutions working on relevant topics, transforming knowledge into a collaborative exercise of reflection and transformation where different actors have a voice.

The organisation emphasises the collaborative nature of effective campaigns, recognizing that the best ideas arise from team efforts and diverse perspectives. Their approach emphasises empathic listening for NGOs, a practice which serves to identify community needs, expectations, and concerns, considering the specific territory and resources. Importantly, it enables NGOs to engage stakeholders by actively creating space for their input instead of dictating solutions. *For more information on this case study [see here](#).*

Innovative knowledge brokering in Namibia

The ASSAR project, aimed to understand climate change vulnerabilities and promote effective adaptation. The project collaborated with stakeholders from national to household levels to produce evidence influencing policy and practice. Namibia, a climate change hotspot, faced challenges like water scarcity, impacting agriculture and economic sectors. Poor governance coordination complicated climate action. The project learned that instead of just sharing knowledge, it needed to focus on building partnerships, empowering people, to collectively generate new ideas. They also worked on improving relationships between different government departments, like the environment and gender ministries. Their goal was to influence important committees that decide on budgets for climate-related activities. *For more information on this case study [see here](#).*

Combining art, theatre and indigenous knowledge in legal action against oil and gas

Researchers and scholar activists in South Africa worked with innovative, transgressive new methodologies such as 'Empatheatre' and animation to tell the stories of local South Africans and their relationships with the sea and to effectively share important knowledge of indigenous leaders. The indigenous knowledge drew on both historical knowledge of the ocean and cultural and spiritual beliefs of many South Africans. In particular it told the story of the soul's journey, depicting how ancestors are believed to reside in the deep ocean, making it a sacred place to many. This knowledge was used in a successful court case to prevent the exploration for new oil and gas reserves in the ocean. For more information on this case study [see here](#).

"This is the first time that art and theatre have been used as evidence to embody intangible heritage of our oceans in South African courts. It has established a new legal precedent: the South African judiciary recognises the sacred relationship of the ocean as a realm for the ancestors. This opens up the role that art can play in supporting Indigenous knowledge in national and international jurisprudence."

PART 2: The Knowledge Brokering Learning Journey: Insights from Practice

On 16 October 2023, partners from Kenya, Indonesia, Paraguay and Brazil joined an online learning session together with SSN and The Broker on knowledge brokering for climate advocacy. Focussing on different elements of knowledge brokering for advocacy the session aimed to create a safe space for common understanding, shared exploration and knowledge exchange. The session started with a collective exploration of the concept of knowledge brokering guiding a common understanding and foundation of what knowledge brokering for advocacy means for the partners. The second part of the session used storytelling to enable partners to share experiences and talk about what worked well and what challenges they faced in the context of their knowledge brokering work. The insights were harvested to define key takeaways and eye-openers and discuss lessons learned which allowed the partners to learn from each other and explore dynamics within knowledge brokering for advocacy.

In this second part of the short read, we present the insights from the learning session, highlighting partners' conceptualisation of knowledge brokering for climate advocacy, the main challenges and knowledge brokering strategies partners use to reach their advocacy goals.

Creating a shared understanding: defining knowledge brokering for advocacy

At the start of our learning journey, we began by collectively exploring how knowledge supports advocacy in the VCA program. Partners were asked, "*What does knowledge-based advocacy mean to you?*". Building on their answers the following definition of knowledge brokering for advocacy was formulated;

THE BROKER

Knowledge brokering for advocacy is the strategic use of knowledge to build partnerships, provide legitimacy, and influence decision-making. It involves networking, aligning knowledge in advocacy networks, and using evidence strategically to inspire change. This includes gathering local perspectives, identifying impactful cases, and connecting knowledge holders to influential spaces to amplify voices for collective action.

This definition highlights the role different partners see for themselves as knowledge brokers within the VCA ecosystem; operating as intermediaries between knowledge holders and decision-makers and turning evidence into a tool to influence change. For example, by highlighting local perspectives and knowledge, and sharing stories and successes from the communities, organisations can mobilise people for an advocacy initiative.

The different perspectives from the partners highlighted key elements and knowledge brokering strategies for advocacy. An inherent part of knowledge brokering in the work of VCA partners was seen as **developing networks and relationships with key actors** in the field. **Creating spaces for knowledge exchange** between these actors provides the basis for including diverse perspectives, enabling marginalised voices and building evidence-based advocacy initiatives. This includes bringing stakeholders together to identify common interests and balancing different perspectives within advocacy networks. These evidence-building efforts are essential to build legitimacy and inspire collective action for advocacy.

Opportunities and challenges in advocacy practices

Through storytelling, partners elaborated on the key learnings that emerged from being a part of the VCA programme. These reflections included the successes and challenges for knowledge brokers in advocacy practices.

Opportunities

Knowledge brokering in the VCA programme involves collaborative processes that set agendas and create platforms, connecting knowledge holders with influential spaces for advocacy. The importance of local ownership, strengthening coordination and inclusive communication and fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships were highlighted by the partners as important opportunities to enhance knowledge brokering in the programme.

In many of the stories, the importance of **multi-stakeholder participation** in evidence building came to the fore. Partners highlighted the value of engaging with diverse stakeholders in their work, recognising that a diversity of perspectives and skills can enhance the effectiveness of advocacy initiatives. **Community engagement** was brought forth as a central concern in these efforts. One partner shared how the team conducted a rapid assessment with communities that served to include their experience and perspectives on the effects of climate change in various policy briefs which were shared at different government levels. Creating a platform for local communities to share their stories and knowledge, provides an opportunity to strengthen local **ownership and engagement** with the programme.

Strengthening **coordination and inclusive communication** across the partnership were also highlighted as key elements for effective knowledge brokering. Strengthening coordination and exploring possibilities for joint media outreach were identified as opportunities to strengthen VCA's knowledge brokering and advocacy potential as it would increase the visibility of the programme and could thereby amplify the stories of change-makers in the field. The establishment of a communication coordination committee was brought forward as a suggestion by one of the partners. Publishing stories in **local magazines and using social media** to amplify the voices of communities and engage the public were identified as effective and inclusive channels for communication. Also, creating a **task force** as was done to coordinate VCA's COP attendance was put forward as an interesting avenue to explore.

A third opportunity that was highlighted was the need for more **partner- or South-South exchange**. One of the partners shared that a study visit to one of the programme countries was key for learning and contextualising the programme. Other partners shared this experience and advocated for more opportunities for knowledge sharing and exchange so that partners can build on each other's experience in knowledge brokering for advocacy.

Challenges

Building on the importance of collaborative knowledge processes, the challenges highlighted during the learning session include barriers experienced on a partnership level but also underscore the complexities faced in partners' advocacy work, both at a global and local level.

One of the key challenges partners identified was a lack of **prioritisation by policy makers**. As one of the partners expressed "*Policy makers and government institutes have so much going on in their daily work that it is difficult to get their attention for our goals*". A lack of political will and political expediency were brought forward by partners as systemic barriers to climate advocacy. Increasing knowledge about advocacy processes to better understand how and when to engage in policy cycles was brought forward as possible knowledge brokering strategies for partners. Especially around election time, it can be an opportune moment to engage policy makers in their advocacy efforts.

A second key challenge was a perceived **lack of time** within the programme to engage systematically in knowledge brokering activities. Climate advocacy is a long-term process that includes building legitimacy and relationships over time both with governments and at community level. In contrast to narrower science-to-policy knowledge brokering roles, it often requires broader civil society engagement and movement building around a shared evidence base for an advocacy action. This requires dedicated time and effort, however, with responsibilities for programme activities and implementation in addition to their organisational advocacy work, some of the partners expressed it was difficult to reserve sufficient time for this process, thereby missing out on an important opportunity for sustained engagement.

The final main challenge that came to the fore was to search for **alignment on a partnership level**. The VCA is a global partnership that operates within local communities and national policy processes. This brings out complexities in how to align local realities with global goals. Creating a shared understanding with a plurality of different partners can be difficult. How do you navigate power dynamics, identify shared

interests, and foster strong alignment among stakeholders? It also raises questions about how to manage knowledge effectively to ensure epistemic justice. **Language barriers** can add to this challenge as the stories and perspectives of local communities and marginalised voices are often not expressed in the main language of the partnership. Providing spaces for co-creation between partners to build mutuality, inclusive partnership governance mechanisms and local language translation and valorisation were put forward as a way to overcome barriers, build trust and manage knowledge effectively and inclusively.

PART 3: A future learning journey

The final part of this insight paper is to reflect on the learning journey so far and explore opportunities for further engagement. This learning journey started by bringing together VCA partners from Kenya, Indonesia, Paraguay, Brazil and South Africa to explore knowledge brokering for advocacy in the program.

Together, partners defined their role as knowledge brokers within the VCA ecosystem where they saw themselves operating as intermediaries between knowledge holders and decision-makers; using evidence as a tool to facilitate change and spur climate action. Through storytelling, partners shared and discussed successes, challenges and lessons learned from the context of their work, contributing to a nuanced understanding of knowledge brokering practices and strategies in advocacy. Lessons emphasised the importance of coordination, visibility, and engagement, with multi-stakeholder participation seen as vital. Engaging diverse perspectives, creating spaces for knowledge exchange, and amplifying voices through diverse media platforms were put forward as opportunities to enhance advocacy effectiveness. Barriers to effective knowledge brokering included the alignment both at the partnership and national policy level, with the issue of prioritisation of knowledge brokering for advocacy featuring as an underlying challenge. Creating spaces for linking and learning within the partnership was brought forward as an important avenue to explore further.

Building on this, SSN has pledged to continue this process by facilitating a learning journey and creating a community of practice to further explore and strengthen knowledge brokering in the VCA partnership. The future learning journey will focus on facilitating learning exchanges among VCA partners, focusing on understanding the diverse approaches taken by partners in different countries, and exploring challenges and lessons learned. Building bonds with other partners is a key goal, creating a collaborative space for learning. The learning journey therefore ideally should promote peer-to-peer learning, exploring best practices and lessons derived from diverse countries, focussing specifically on topics of interest: tools, strategies, and innovative ideas for effective communication, knowledge mobilisation and advocacy in VCA projects.

Based on the outcomes of the learning session the following objectives for this learning journey are defined.

- Create a safe space for mutual learning and engagement among six VCA core partners
- Develop a shared understanding of knowledge brokering for climate advocacy
- Generate insights and lessons learned from knowledge brokering modalities and strategies
- Identify knowledge gaps and opportunities for capacity building
- Embedding and further developing learnings within the broader VCA network

In the online session and through a follow-up survey, the following pathways to guide this learning journey were identified:

Engaging Partners across the partnership to strengthen ownership

- Exploring the roles of various partners within the partnership.
- Strategies for effective engagement and collaboration with local stakeholders.
- Empowering and involving local partners to take ownership of knowledge brokering activities.

Knowledge Brokering Framework for Advocacy

- Designing a robust framework for knowledge brokering in advocacy initiatives.
- Ensuring the framework addresses local context, issues, and priorities.

Building Mutuality between Local realities and Global Advocacy goals

- Exploring ways to identify common local issues that resonate globally.
- Defining the right balance between collaborative efforts and individual initiatives and developing strategies for ensuring that approaches contribute to the overall advocacy goals.
- Strategies for building mutual understanding and collaboration on shared advocacy goals.

Conclusion

Creating space for open and reflective discussions between VCA partners is seen as an important start of this process. The conversation starters approach, rooted in the different pathways, form entry points for building connections between organisations and levels in the programme and for exploring possibilities, understandings, and priorities together to build learning in a partnership. Engaging with and listening to organisations by jointly exploring possibilities, understandings, and priorities within the VCA programme can as such not only build knowledge brokering and advocacy capacity but also more general engagement and commitment in the partnership.

ANNEX 1: Key resources: An annotated bibliography

| Knowledge Brokering | |
|---|--|
| Knowledge Brokering for climate action | Lucia Scodanibbio, Georgina Cundill, Lisa McNamara & Michelle du Toit (2023) Effective climate knowledge brokering in a world of urgent transitions, <i>Development in Practice</i> , 33:7, 755-761, DOI: 10.1080/09614524.2022.2159932 |
| <p>This article discusses the role of knowledge mediation in addressing climate change and supporting development. It highlights the need for knowledge mediation to move beyond a linear approach to transferring scientific knowledge and instead focus on innovation mediation. The authors argue that effective knowledge mediation involves navigating complex relationships, power dynamics and governance issues.</p> <p>The article highlights lessons learned from the experience of the Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN) and emphasises the importance of creating inclusive spaces for different types of knowledge, including local, indigenous and scientific knowledge. It is suggested that knowledge brokerage should not only be about knowledge, but also about understanding and working within administrative, social and political contexts.</p> <p>The role of the knowledge broker is described as facilitating change, engaging in decision-making processes and addressing challenges such as limited political will, competing priorities and bureaucracy. The article calls for a shift from a focus on knowledge products to "knowledge activities" that involve creating strong, sustainable and reflexive relationships between science and policy.</p> <p>The authors propose several approaches to effective knowledge brokering, including creating bridges, promoting mutual understanding, nurturing joint decision-making processes and emphasising the importance of collaborative spaces. They stress that knowledge brokers need to work at the interface of different types of knowledge, sectors and disciplines, requiring a range of skills and capabilities.</p> <p>In conclusion, the article encourages knowledge brokers to challenge the status quo, engage with politics and governance, and approach knowledge brokerage as an adaptive and reflective process. It acknowledges the challenges of capturing measurable short-term results but emphasises the long-term impact of innovative knowledge brokering in addressing climate change and promoting sustainable development.</p> | |
| Knowledge Brokering Partnerships | Sasha al Busaidy, Rikke van der Veen, Mariëlle Karssenbergh, Vanessa Nigten. Unravelling Knowledge Brokering Partnerships: Insights from Collaborations between Dutch Knowledge Platforms and Partners in Low-and Middle-Income Countries. <i>The Broker</i> 2023. https://www.thebrokeronline.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Unravelling-Knowledge-Brokering-Partnerships.pdf |
| <p>This two-pager discusses a comprehensive study on knowledge brokering partnerships between Dutch Knowledge Platforms and organisations in Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs). The platforms aim to foster evidence-based, inclusive, and informed international development cooperation through</p> | |

mutual learning and diverse perspectives.

The study explores the complexities of knowledge brokering partnerships, emphasising the importance of equity in North-South collaborations. It highlights the variations in organisational structures and thematic focuses among the four Dutch Knowledge Platforms and their LMIC partners. The summary captures key insights, lessons learned, and actionable recommendations to strengthen knowledge-brokering collaborations.

Community level Capacity building and knowledge co-creation

Gina Ziervogel, Johan Enqvist, Luke Metelerkamp & John van Breda (2022) Supporting transformative climate adaptation: community-level capacity building and knowledge co-creation in South Africa, *Climate Policy*, 22:5, 607-622, [DOI:10.1080/14693062.2020.1863180](https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2020.1863180)

Calls for transformative adaptation to climate change require attention to the type of capacity building that can support it. Community-level capacity building can help to ensure ownership and legitimacy of longer-term interventions. Given that marginalised communities are highly vulnerable to climate risk, it is important to build their capacity to adapt locally and to integrate their perspectives into higher level adaptation measures. Current adaptation policy does not pay sufficient attention to this. Using a Cape Town-based project on water governance in low-income urban settlements, this paper explores how a transdisciplinary research project supported capacity building. Our findings suggest that knowledge co-creation at the community level is central to the capacity building that is needed in order to inform transformative adaptation. The collaborative methodology used is also important; we illustrate how a transdisciplinary approach can contribute to transformative adaptation where knowledge is co-produced to empower community-level actors and organisations to assert their perspectives with greater confidence and legitimacy. We argue that if capacity-building processes shift from the top-down transfer of existing knowledge to the co-creation of contextual understandings, they have the potential to deliver more transformative adaptation. By considering diverse sources of knowledge and knowledge systems, capacity building can start to confront inequalities and shift dominant power dynamics. Adaptation policy could provide more guidance and support for community-level transdisciplinary processes that can enable this type of transformative adaptation.

Roles and responsibilities in knowledge brokering

Podcast Science for Using Research (SURE) : Episode 3 | What are the roles and responsibilities of actors involved in knowledge brokering? | 13 January 2022
<https://anchor.fm/wotro/episodes/SURE-Episode-3-What-are-the-roles-and-responsibilities-of-actors-involved-in-knowledge-brokering-e1aktr0>

Who do you need to involve to ensure an inclusive process in which everyone’s knowledge and interests are served?

Conscious reflection about the different roles and responsibilities of participants, users and moderators of the knowledge brokering process is key if we want to ensure knowledge is used to create societal impact. This means that multiple sources of knowledge must be taken on board. It is helpful if a neutral space for knowledge brokering can be arranged as this enhances the reliability and trust in the process and the knowledge being produced.

| Knowledge/evidence ecosystem | |
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| The Evidence Ecosystem | Stewart, R., Dayal, H., Langer, L. et al. The evidence ecosystem in South Africa: growing resilience and institutionalisation of evidence use. <i>Palgrave Commun</i> 5, 90 (2019). https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-019-0303-0 |
| <p>This article discusses the importance of an evidence-informed approach to policy-making and implementation, emphasising its core principles of equity, equality, accountability, and transparency. The author challenges the perception that this approach is solely a product of 'developed' Northern countries and a technical intervention. Instead, the article explores the evolving landscape of evidence-informed decision-making in the South, with a focus on South Africa's evidence ecosystem. It suggests that the South has unique perspectives and contributions to offer, challenging the traditional North-to-South intervention narrative.</p> | |
| Facilitating CSO research from the Global South; insights from India, Jordan & Uganda | Lijfering, Siri, B. Rajeshwari, and Margit van Wessel. "ADVANCING RESEARCH IN CSO PARTNERSHIPS." (2021). https://wncb.org/assets/2022/01/WNCB_WUR_public-report-2022_ENG.pdf |
| <p>This guide highlights the growing importance of evidence-based approaches in development work and the involvement of civil society organisations (CSOs) in research initiatives. The guide aims to help CSOs address power imbalances, promote locally-led research, and enhance the relevance of programs by providing principles, pathways for change, and conversation starters.</p> | |
| From source to action | |
| Co-creation of knowledge and action | Chambers, J. M., Wyborn, C., Ryan, M. E., Reid, R. S., Riechers, M., Serban, A., ... & Pickering, T. . Six modes of co-production for sustainability. <i>Nature Sustainability</i> (2021). https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/176979/1/OLD%20VERSION_GEC-S-21-00593.pdf |
| <p>This article explores the concept of "co-productive agility" in the context of initiatives worldwide that aim to address social-ecological sustainability challenges through the co-production of knowledge and action. The authors analyse such initiatives and conceptualise co-productive agility as a crucial factor for transforming tensions into sustainable outcomes.</p> <p>Co-productive agility, as defined in the article, involves the willingness and ability of diverse actors to engage in reflexive dialogues iteratively. This process allows for the growth of shared ideas and actions that may not have been possible initially. The key aspect is embedding knowledge production within change processes, enabling continuous recognition, repositioning, and navigation of tensions and opportunities.</p> <p>The article identifies four pathways through which co-productive agility contributes to sustainability transformations:</p> | |

- Elevating marginalized agendas while maintaining their integrity and promoting justice.
- Questioning dominant agendas by engaging with power to challenge assumptions.
- Navigating conflicting agendas to actively transform interconnected paradigms, practices, and structures.
- Exploring diverse agendas to foster learning and mutual respect for a variety of perspectives.

The authors provide a framework [Six modes of co-production] to enable agility in sustainability transformations. They argue that research and practice often focus on closing down debates over different agendas, avoiding, suppressing, or polarising tensions. They advocate for efforts to facilitate better interactions among diverse agendas and encourage an "open up" approach instead of a "close down" tendency.

Locally led adaptation: nine mutually reinforcing drivers for grassroots initiatives

Westoby, R., Clissold, R., McNamara, K. E., Ahmed, I., Resurrección, B. P., Fernando, N., & Huq, S. Locally led adaptation: Drivers for appropriate grassroots initiatives. *Local Environment* (2021).
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2021.1884669>

This article explores the urgency of adapting to the impacts of climate change at the local scale. Despite the localised nature of climate change impacts, local communities often have limited control over how adaptation is funded, designed, and delivered. The article draws from grounded research with communities in the Asia-Pacific region, examining three case examples—the coastal belt of Bangladesh, a periurban informal settlement in the Philippines, and a small rural island in Vanuatu.

The focus is on locally-led adaptation (LLA) as a means to achieve more equitable, effective, and sustainable outcomes. The article identifies nine mutually reinforcing drivers of LLA to improve grassroots initiatives. These drivers emphasise locally led decision-making, leveraging local strengths and resources (institutions, social networks, local knowledge), acknowledging local realities, considering local vulnerability contexts and inequalities, defining local metrics for measuring success and supporting or enabling local agendas by external agencies.

The article emphasises the importance of allowing local communities to determine their own adaptation futures and ensuring that finite funding resources are utilised meaningfully. It highlights the inefficiencies and challenges in the current adaptation funding landscape and calls for a rethinking of adaptation at the local scale to address the urgent priorities of climate change.

Advocacy

Evidence in Advocacy

Van Wessel, M. (2021). The politics of evidence in advocacy by civil society organizations. In: Ludwig, D., Boogaard, B., Macnaghten, P., & Leeuwis, C. (Eds), *The politics of knowledge in inclusive development and innovation* (pp. 181-195). Abingdon: Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003112525-16>

This chapter talks about how evidence is used by civil society groups to advocate for development. It emphasises that evidence isn't just objective and neutral—it's shaped by relationships and politics. The chapter explores how different types of evidence play various roles in the advocacy work of these groups. It also challenges the idea that evidence is completely unbiased.

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| <p>By looking at how civil society groups interact with policymakers and with each other, the chapter highlights the political aspects of evidence creation and use. It suggests that we need to recognize these dynamics to ensure fairness, representation, and legitimacy in development efforts. Ultimately, the chapter suggests ways to move forward by considering these insights.</p> | |
| <p>Influencing for impact guide</p> | <p>English, Richard. "Influencing for Impact Guide: How to deliver effective influencing strategies." (2020). https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/621048/gd-influencing-for-impact-guide-150920-en.pdf;jsessionid=61D20385132E58FE78AEBE30D0EE7502?sequence=1</p> |
| <p>This guide is designed to support civil society organisations, Oxfam teams and partners to develop and deliver ‘influencing strategies’ for social justice that tackle the structural causes of poverty, inequality and environmental crisis - influencing strategies that will shift unequal and unjust power relations, and change policies, practices, attitudes, behaviours and social norms. It describes how to design effective influencing strategies and put them into practice and explains the tactics that you can use to make change happen.</p> | |
| <h2>Power dynamics</h2> | |
| <p>Power dynamics and natural resources</p> | <p>https://www.thebrokeronline.eu/what-to-read-and-where/</p> |
| <p>This dossier on ‘Power dynamics and natural resources’ contains five case-study articles and a synthesis summary on the power dynamics underlying both ‘open’ and ‘hidden’ conflicts over natural resources in Peru, Ethiopia, Ecuador, India/Sri-Lanka, and Brazil.</p> | |
| <p>Power relations in North-South Context Collaboration</p> | <p>Dannecker, P. (2022). Collaboration in a ‘North-South’ Context: The Role of Power Relations and the Various Context-Based Conditions. <i>The European Journal of Development Research</i>, 34, 1716-1726. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41287-022-00550-0</p> |
| <p>This paper explores the dynamics of power structures in research-practice collaborations, transdisciplinary projects, and participation, with a focus on how power asymmetries globally and locally impact these collaborations. It discusses the influence of historical, social, or cultural power structures on the transformative potential of the knowledge produced. Drawing on experiences from a North-South capacity-building project, the paper highlights how funding schemes and the positionalities of involved actors contribute to the creation and reproduction of power structures.</p> | |
| <p>The main argument presented is a shift in focus from technical improvements in research-practice collaborations and participation to a more nuanced consideration of contextual factors and power relations at each phase of collaborative endeavours. The paper emphasises the need for reflection on power structures, especially in the context of North-South collaborations, within the current scientific and science-policy debates.</p> | |
| <p>Starting from the South:</p> | <p>van Wessel, M., Kontinen, T., & Bawole, J.N. (Eds.). (2023).</p> |

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| <p>localization, decolonization, and power dynamics in civil society collaborations</p> | <p>Reimagining Civil Society Collaborations in Development: Starting from the South (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003241003</p> |
| <p>This book focuses on civil society organisations (CSOs) as drivers of development in various contexts referred to as the Global South. It aims to contribute to the ongoing discussions about localization, decolonization, and power dynamics in civil society collaborations in development.</p> <p>This book takes a transformative stance, reimagining roles, relations and processes. It does so from five complementary angles: (1) Southern CSOs reclaiming the lead, 2) displacement of the North-South dyad, (3) Southern-centred questions, (4) new roles for Northern actors, and (5) new starting points for collaboration.</p> <p>The book emphasises the need to "Start from the South" and calls for a reimagining and recentering of civil society collaborations in development. It suggests that INGOs, Northern CSOs, and donors should follow the lead of Southern CSOs, recognizing their contextually geared perspectives. The content is based on 19 empirically grounded chapters and provides an agenda for further research, design, and experimentation in the field of civil society collaborations in development.</p> | |
| <p>Epistemic justice</p> | |
| <p>Epistemic Justice</p> | <p>Cummings, S., Dhewa, C., Kemboi, G., & Young, S. (2023). Doing epistemic justice in sustainable development: Applying the philosophical concept of epistemic injustice to the real world. <i>Sustainable Development</i>, 31(3), 1965-1977. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1002/sd.2497</p> |
| <p>Originally conceptualised by the philosopher, Miranda Fricker, epistemic injustice— unfair treatment of individuals and groups in knowledge-related and communicative practices—is increasingly being employed to delineate individual and collective injustice in healthcare, information sciences, education and sustainable development. Embedded in many other forms of social injustice and inequality, epistemic injustice is a particularly serious problem for sustainable development, undermining the global community's ability to deal with 'wicked' problems. Building on the more conceptually developed, philosophical framework of epistemic injustice and recent research from other fields, this article develops a holistic action-oriented framework of epistemic justice, namely fair treatment in knowledge-related and communicative practices, for sustainable development and beyond. It also adds to the current framework of individual and collective injustice by including a range of new insights on structural and systemic epistemic injustice, such as linguistic injustice and epistemicide.</p> | |
| <p>Knowledge Justice</p> | <p>km4dev knowledge cafe 25: From knowledge injustice to knowledge justice: the role of KM4DEV (2022) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulEhky1J3Jg</p> |
| <p>Gladys Kemboi and Sarah Cummings share current perspectives on knowledge-related (also called epistemic) justice. Instead of the common focus on understanding the multitude of epistemic injustices, Gladys and Sarah will share an exciting, brand-new perspective on knowledge-related justice which can help us in our efforts to counteract injustices in international development, such as not listening to</p> | |

communities and marginalising local and knowledge. Many of these approaches are already part of our work as KM4Dev practitioners but this exciting new perspective will show how we can do more as individuals and also as the KM4Dev community.

Examples from practice

Using evidence in policy and practice lessons from Africa

Goldman, Ian, and Mine Pabari. Using evidence in policy and practice: lessons from Africa. Taylor & Francis, 2020.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003007043>

This book is an exploration of how African policymakers and development practitioners can effectively apply interventions to promote the use of evidence to improve development outcomes and impacts. It discusses the challenges and opportunities in evidence-based or evidence-informed decision-making in African countries. The book presents case studies from various African countries, including Kenya, Uganda, South Africa, Benin, Ghana, and the ECOWAS region, to highlight the experiences of organisations and individuals using evidence to inform development outcomes. The focus is on understanding the factors that facilitate or inhibit the use of evidence and drawing lessons from these experiences.

Knowledge for Change

Scodanibbio, L.; McNamara, L.; Angula, M.; Togarepi, C. and Shalumbu-Shivute, B. (2021) Lessons from Mainstreaming Climate Change in Namibia, Climate and Development Knowledge Network, South Africa
https://cdkn.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/CDKN%20Learning%20Story%20KC%20-%20Namibia_WEB.pdf

This learning story forms part of the CDKN Knowledge for Change series, which reflects on the common challenges, lessons and successes CDKN and its partners have encountered in facilitating evidence-based decision-making to accelerate climate action. The aim of this work is to better understand how knowledge and evidence on climate change can inform and translate into policy and implementation. This reflection process has investigated different tools and approaches for enhancing the use of knowledge in decision-making, the barriers encountered in facilitating change, and lessons useful for others who navigate similar challenges.

Improving Policymakers' access to evidence

Ben-Vital Kpanou, Dr Castro Gbedomon. Challenges and lessons learned in improving policymakers' access to evidence on food and nutrition security. ACED 2021.
<https://www.acedafrica.org/en/challenges-and-lessons-learned-in-improving-policymakers-access-to-evidence-on-food-and-nutrition-security/>

This article emphasises the crucial role of evidence in guiding community development interventions, particularly in the context of decentralisation in Africa. Local authorities face trade-offs between daily needs, scarce resources, and political considerations. Recent research in Benin reveals that local policymakers encounter difficulties accessing reliable and relevant evidence for food and nutrition security (FNS) decisions. Non-scientific evidence, including local beliefs and citizen opinions, holds significance for these policymakers. Downsizing scientific evidence to align with local realities and

enhancing accessibility are identified challenges. ACED is working on a pilot to address these issues, by supporting collaboration between policymakers and research communities to meet evidence needs.

Science Comics

Matelski, M. (Author). (2022). Science comics on community and NGO perspectives in Mui Basin, Kenya.
https://research.vu.nl/files/237053108/Donkro_Nkwanta_comics_English_version.pdf

Science Comic on community-based legitimacy for advocacy organisations. It provides insights into the Mui Basin case in Kenya. The community expresses frustration over a lack of information from investors and the government, fueled by past experiences of environmental guideline neglect and unfair compensation by mining companies. Fearful of displacement and environmental pollution, residents are sceptical about the promised job opportunities. NGOs are actively engaged, providing information on rights, potential consequences of mining, and specific attention to land rights for vulnerable groups. Environmental organizations are also stepping in, offering assistance and pushing to elevate the issue internationally. The government's plans for mining in the area remain uncertain.

Matelski, M. (Author). (2023). Science comics on Donkro Nkwanta community in Ghana resisting mining companies.
https://research.vu.nl/files/220549840/Mui_Basin_booklet_English_version.pdf

Science Comic on community-based legitimacy for advocacy organisations. It provides insights into the Donkro Nkwanta case in Ghana. Wacam, a community-based NGO, supports mining-affected communities in various areas, including Donkro-Nkwanta. The community primarily relies on farming, and while some welcomed the mining company's prospect for jobs and income, others learned of the negative impacts from a nearby mining town. Concerned community members visited the town independently, discovering environmental, economic, health, social, and security-related issues associated with mining. With Wacam's assistance, the community received training, organized exposure trips, and documented their opposition to mining. Despite the mining company's return in 2015, the community's questions went unanswered, leading to demonstrations and the establishment of watchdogs. With education and prior warnings, the community resisted both the gold and oil companies.

Climate communication

Luisa F. Lema Vélez, Daniel Hermelin, Margarita Fontecha, and Dunia H. Urrego Subject: Climate Change Communication Online
 Publication Date: May 2017
[DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190228620.013.598](https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228620.013.598)

The authors contrast the practices of these sectors with those of non-governmental organisations working in Colombia to show how they address the specific climate communication needs facing the country. These NGOs directly face the challenge of working with diverse population groups in this multicultural, multiethnic, and megadiverse country. NGOs customise languages, channels, and messages for different audiences and contexts, with the ultimate goal of building capacity in local communities, influencing policymakers, and sensitising the private sector. Strategies that result from the work of interdisciplinary groups, involve feedback from the audiences, and incorporate adaptive management have proven to be particularly effective.