

# Supporting Local Voices



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The purpose of this toolkit is to help readers identify ways in which they can support poor and vulnerable people to have their voices heard directly by policy makers.

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## Case Studies

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## The Climate Change Advocacy Toolkits

These toolkits aim to guide and support civil society actors in the South in their efforts to advocate for pro-poor climate policies. They include a mix of:

-  instructions on how to plan and conduct advocacy interventions,
-  a range of case stories on how civil society works to influence climate change policy-making, and
-  references for further reading.

The toolkits are developed and published by *Southern Voices on Climate Change*. Since 2011, this Programme has supported around 20 civil society networks in the global South to advocate for climate policies that benefit poor and vulnerable people. The Programme is implemented by the Climate Capacity Consortium, comprised of four Danish and two international NGOs, with CARE Denmark as lead agency, and IIED as co-publisher of the toolkits. Funding is from DANIDA from the Danish climate finance envelope.

Further information on the Southern Voices networks and the Programme is available at [www.southernvoices.net](http://www.southernvoices.net)



## Introduction

Climate change is a particularly pressing issue for the poor and vulnerable. They are often worst affected by climate change impacts, and yet they have contributed least to the problem and have the least capacity to do anything about it.

With decisions relating to climate change made largely by governments and those in power, civil society is increasingly looking to ensure that the poor and vulnerable are able to reach and influence decision makers and are not excluded from policy making processes.

It is not only a matter of justice and rights that policy making and the design, management and monitoring of projects and programmes should involve those who are affected, but also those projects and programmes will be more effective with community involvement. This includes activities related to adaptation, REDD, forest management, mitigation and energy policies.

Involving those who are most vulnerable in decision making can be challenging, however. Communities are not homogenous entities that speak with one voice. The very poorest and most vulnerable may not always be well-represented by networks and organisations speaking on behalf of civil society.

This tool provides a number of examples from *Southern Voices* partners that show how civil society has helped local communities reach and influence those in power. Some of these communities are very poor and vulnerable, but others are more organised and empowered.



## Why voices of the poor and marginalised are not heard and how they can be strengthened

Policy makers and officials responsible for implementing policies and programmes may not want to engage with poor communities because they don't want to be challenged on how pro-poor their policies and actions really are. Or they may simply be dismissive of the poor's ability to engage in policy discussions, thinking that they have nothing to offer. This can lead policy makers and implementers to make decisions behind closed doors, or to invite their own choice of civil society 'representatives' to participate on consultation exercises, excluding the poor.

Poor communities may not feel able to engage with local and national officials because they lack confidence and skills, fear the repercussions, or have no structures that enable effective organisation and collective action.

### It's all about power and decision making spaces<sup>1</sup>

Faces of power:

- Visible power – observable decision making mechanisms, institutionalised in formal and recognisable rules, laws, structures and procedures (usually controlled by those in power).
- Hidden power – powerful people and institutions maintain their influence by setting and manipulating agendas, marginalising the concerns and voices of less powerful groups.
- Invisible power – norms and beliefs, socialisation, ideology or culture that shape and limit how we understand our society and our role in it.

Spaces:

- Closed spaces: decisions made behind closed doors, often without providing opportunities for inclusion.
- Invited spaces: some people are asked to participate but within set boundaries.
- Created or claimed spaces: less powerful actors come together to create or claim a space where they can set their own agenda.

Levels of power include household, community, local, national and global.

1. Adapted from *Power: A Practical Guide for Facilitating Social Change and Programming on the Right to be Heard: A Learning Companion* (see Resources section).

As advocates and campaigners, there are many things that we can do to redress the imbalance of power between policy makers and poor, marginalised and vulnerable communities:

- a. Support communities to organise themselves and establish structures for internal discussion and collective action.
- b. Enable communities to learn about climate change, its impacts and their legal and human rights.
- c. Build the capacity of communities to take advocacy action, including monitoring the impact of government policies and engaging in dialogue with influential actors.
- d. Broker dialogue between communities and officials.
- e. Convene meetings, conferences and other events where communities can speak directly to policy makers, politicians, officials and other influential actors.
- f. Support communities to mobilise and take collective action, including protest.



## Brokering and convening

When brokering dialogue between policy makers and poor and vulnerable communities, you are acting as an intermediary, a channel of communication. You should not edit or change what each party has to say (you need to be an 'honest broker'), although you may need to explain aspects that aren't clear and put them into context. A brokering role may be needed when the power imbalance is so great that vulnerable communities are unwilling to face the policy makers directly.

Convening dialogue involves bringing people together. This may be through hosting a workshop, a consultation event or a roundtable discussion. By organising and/or hosting the event, you have the ability to set the agenda and reduce the power imbalance between communities and officials (being careful not to exert your own hidden power over the communities).



### Case Study 1. Bringing village folk and local policy makers together in Andhra Pradesh, India

In May 2012, All India Women's Conference (AIWC) arranged a simple climate change awareness raising programme in Komaragiri, a village in Andhra Pradesh, India. Local villagers comprising of fishermen, agriculture workers, weavers and the general public shared their observations about changes in their natural environment. Academics, a government agricultural officer and AIWC staff helped raise their awareness about climate change and explain how their observations could be linked to the health impacts and changes to sources of sustenance and livelihoods they had been experiencing. The next day, AIWC organised a seminar at the district headquarters in Kakinada. Government functionaries from local, state and national levels, academics, villagers, industrialists, health workers etc. attended and findings from the previous day's awareness raising programme were presented. The villagers were able to present their problems directly to policy makers and get details about various government schemes. People speaking the local language helped the villagers put their needs into words that the policy makers could understand.

Bringing villagers and local policy makers together allowed them to exchange views, present difficulties and suggest solutions together. Several initiatives emerged. The district administration asked for AIWC support to arrange waste management training in the village. Following this, the government announced incentives for farmers who managed the waste generated on their fields and several farmers received help to claim these benefits. Ensuring that policies were not forced on local people without first understanding their perspectives was central to the success of this initiative.

More information: [www.southernvoices.net/inforsesouthasia](http://www.southernvoices.net/inforsesouthasia)

Source: Usha Nair, INFORSE South Asia / AIWC



## Advocacy capacity building

The capacity of community leaders and organisations to do effective advocacy can be built through:

- training
- peer support
- legal advice
- funding
- information provision
- general encouragement and feedback

Bringing individual organisations together into larger networks can also strengthen their advocacy voice. There is no 'one size fits all' approach to capacity building – it depends on what the community organisations and leaders want and need, and what you can offer.



### Case Study 2. Seeking government support to stop illegal forest use in Kilwa and Lindi districts, Tanzania

Local communities were getting increasingly frustrated by illegal logging using chainsaws in the forests on Kinyope Village land, encroachment and illegal charcoal production in Sanduku Village Land Forest Reserve, and the use of illegal permits to harvest forest resources in Kitope Forest Reserve. The National Community Forestry Conservation Network of Tanzania – MJUMITA – helped link communities and village authorities with government authorities at the district, regional and national level to address these problems.

MJUMITA helped revive the Village Natural Resources Committee in Kinyope Village following corruption allegations against previous committee members. MJUMITA also helped the community forest conservation network in Kinjumbi Ward report illegal harvesting in the Kitope Forest Reserve by a company in Kinjumbi Village to the appropriate authorities. MJUMITA helped villagers and the community forest conservation network in Somangasimu, Somangandumbo and Marendego villages secure legal advice regarding the prosecution of a villager accused of encroaching on forest reserve land and illegally producing charcoal. The accused was ordered to pay a fine, in accordance with village bylaws, and when he refused MJUMITA provided support to open a court case at Miteja Primary Court against him. MJUMITA worked with the media to ensure good coverage of these issues, and it reported on them in its quarterly newsletter and to various civil society coalitions working on forests and REDD in Tanzania.

Key steps for others wishing to replicate these advocacy initiatives elsewhere include the following:

- Establish an independent community network to work in parallel with existing formal governance institutions in the area.
- Train community networks on advocacy issues.
- Train village authorities and community networks on good governance practices.
- Establish sustainable and diplomatic governance monitoring tools to be used by the community networks to monitor the performances of village and district governments.
- Establish a sustainable funding mechanism to support community advocacy activities.

Key issues to avoid are as follows:

- Do not do advocacy on behalf of communities. It is better to help them do it themselves or do it with them.
- Do not pay communities to do advocacy, but rather train them and help them to understand that it should be done according to their own demands and on their own initiative.
- Do not support interventions that lead to misunderstandings between the communities and their leaders. Make sure the process is diplomatic.
- Do not give space for government leaders to personalize the process. It needs to involve the entire community.
- Ensure advocacy activities are part of a sustainable process rather than a one-off event.

Further information: [www.mjumita.org](http://www.mjumita.org) and [www.tfcg.org](http://www.tfcg.org)

Source: Rahima Njaidi, MJUMITA



## Participatory research and action

Even if communities are unable or unwilling to speak directly to those in power, they can still be involved in researching the impact of government policies and participating in the development of policy recommendations.

See also *Climate Change Advocacy Toolkit No. 9: Policy Implementation & Finance* for more details on community monitoring of policy implementation.



### Case Study 3. Mainstreaming local adaptation planning in Nepal

In Nepal, Local Adaptation Plans of Action (LAPAs) have been embedded within the National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) to ensure that bottom-up adaptation planning is mainstreamed into government policy and planning processes. In late 2011, the Nepalese government adopted LAPAs as the official framework for adaptation planning in Nepal. This will help channel funding for climate change to the local level. Indeed, the NAPA states that 80 per cent of climate finance must go to local level implementation.

Nepal's long history of community forestry provided a precedent on which to base these achievements, and policies such as the Decentralisation Act of 1982 provided a supportive legislative framework in which to cluster bottom-up natural resource management and development activities and hence mainstream adaptation into national level planning.

The Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Local Development led planning: seven pilots were conducted to inform the planning process and the Government of Nepal also developed a seven-step framework to integrate local adaptation into national adaptation planning. This provides a number of tools, including Participatory Rural Assessment, to ensure that local voices are heard, valued and genuinely influence decision-making to shape broader adaptation planning processes.

The Federation of Community Forestry Users, Nepal (FECOFUN) also worked to ensure local communities were integrated into planning processes by helping them develop community plans of action and putting pressure on local and district government agencies to recognize these plans and support their implementation. Use of participatory processes, local tools and local languages were central to these activities, but efforts were made not to raise community expectations.

Source: *National Framework on Local Adaptation Plans for Action*, Government of Nepal, Ministry of Science Technology and Environment, Singha Durbar, 2011; Nanki Kaur, IIED; Dil Raj Khanal, FECOFUN.



## Popular education and mobilisation

Information is also power. By helping to educate local communities about climate change and government policies, you are giving them tools to adapt their own lives as well as setting them on the path to have their voices heard by policy makers.

See also *Climate Change Advocacy Toolkit No. 6: Engaging the Public* for more ideas on engaging local communities and mobilising protest.



### Case Study 4. Feeding lessons from communities into policy making processes in Zimbabwe

Community Based Adaptation in Africa (CBAA) project activities in Zimbabwe in 2010 included efforts to feed lessons from grass-roots adaptation activities up to higher levels to shape policy and influence decision makers. Communities were trained to document project experiences using video, and the films that emerged, as well as results from a socio-economic survey conducted under the project, were presented to various government stakeholders at a series of meetings. The community also developed a drama describing the climate change related challenges they faced and the help they needed from government to address them. These activities helped inform the national climate change policy development process and encourage national leadership to develop policy based on bottom-up adaptation approaches. The project made it clear that communities have a wealth of knowledge about adaptation, and when involved in developing adaptation projects from the start, they can easily take issues to policy makers themselves given the opportunity to attend policy related meetings. Policy makers learnt that rather than being victims of climate change, communities can act as agents of change.

Source: Sherpard Zvigadza, ZERO



### Case Study 5. Raising awareness in Nepal to support local adaptation planning

Climate change policy in Nepal states that 80 per cent of national level funding for adaptation should go to communities for local level adaptation activities. Communities are thus advocating for local governments to allocate sufficient support for community adaptation plans of action. FECOFUN – the Federation of Community Forestry Users, Nepal, which represents 18,000 community forestry groups, has been working with community forestry groups and drinking water groups to raise awareness about climate change and develop these plans. Central to this work is using participatory processes to develop understanding of climate change, identify local climate change impacts on food production and biodiversity, and identify traditional practices for increasing resilience. With support from FECOFUN, communities developed prioritised lists of activities which were then turned into action plans. These were then integrated into existing local government plans, with associated implementation and monitoring plans developed.

**Pitfalls to avoid** when replicating this work include:

- using participatory tools which are socially unacceptable or lack gender balance
- increasing local community expectations without guaranteed results
- using foreign languages when working with communities
- using high-tech tools and solutions during the discussions when local tools will suffice
- developing dependency on external resources or people

FECOFUN also worked with the media to encourage reporting on community experiences with developing and adopting these local adaptation plans. This put more pressure on local and district government agencies to recognize the plans and allocate resources for implementation.

Source: Dil Raj Khanal, FECOFUN



## Further information and resources

*Citizen Report Card Learning Toolkit* – An e-learning resource to understand how to apply Citizen Report Card processes. [www.citizenreportcard.com/](http://www.citizenreportcard.com/)

*Citizen Voice and Action: A Field Guide* [www.wvi.org/local-advocacy/publication/citizen-voice-and-action-field-guide](http://www.wvi.org/local-advocacy/publication/citizen-voice-and-action-field-guide)

*Participatory Monitoring, Evaluation, Reflection and Learning for Community-based Adaptation: A revised manual for local practitioners*. CARE International, 2014. [www.careclimatechange.org/files/CARE\\_PMERL\\_a\\_revised\\_manual.pdf](http://www.careclimatechange.org/files/CARE_PMERL_a_revised_manual.pdf)

*PG Exchange Toolkit*. A comprehensive online toolkit providing information on nine different categories of participatory governance practices, including more than 30 individual approaches and tools. Each section includes the benefits of using the approach, challenges and lessons, and a resources section linking to further toolkits. The toolkit covers public information, education and deliberation, advocacy and citizen voice, public dialogue, elections, policy and planning, public budgets and expenditures, monitoring and evaluating public services, and public oversight. [http://pgexchange.org/index.php?option=com\\_alphacontent&view=alphacontent&Itemid=79](http://pgexchange.org/index.php?option=com_alphacontent&view=alphacontent&Itemid=79)

*Power: A practical guide for facilitating social change* by Raji Hungan & Jethro Pettit, published by the Carnegie UK Trust, available for free download here: <http://carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/2010/power---a-practical-guide-for-facilitating-social->

*Power Tools for Policy Influence in Natural Resource Management*, IIED. A website introducing a number of 'power tools' to help marginalised people and their allies have a greater positive influence on natural resources policy, though also applicable to other sectors. [www.policy-powertools.org/](http://www.policy-powertools.org/)

*Programming on the Right to be Heard: a learning companion*, published by Oxfam in 2014, available for free download here: <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/the-right-to-be-heard-framework-a-learning-companion-254793>

The Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance has compiled a list of resources to help with advocacy (not climate change specific). See here: [www.e-alliance.ch/en/s/advocacy-capacity/resources/](http://www.e-alliance.ch/en/s/advocacy-capacity/resources/)

*Voice: Representation and People's Democracy* is a resource book produced by Action Aid, available for free download here: [http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/actionaid\\_voice\\_resource\\_book\\_2\\_page\\_spread.pdf](http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/actionaid_voice_resource_book_2_page_spread.pdf)



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## Toolkits in this series

Toolkit 1: Start Here! Introducing Advocacy and the Climate Change Advocacy Toolkits

Toolkit 2: Planning Advocacy

Toolkit 3: Framing the Debate: Messages and Communication

Toolkit 4: Strengthening Advocacy Networks

Toolkit 5: Influencing Decision Makers

Toolkit 6: Engaging the Public

Toolkit 7: Engaging the Media

Toolkit 8: Supporting Local Voices

Toolkit 9: Policy Implementation & Finance

## Have your say

Readers are invited to provide feedback on the Advocacy Toolkits and experiences of their use at the Southern Voices discussion forum: <http://forum.southernvoices.net/categories/toolkit>



**Strengthening southern voices in  
advocating climate policies that  
benefit poor and vulnerable people**



Funded by DANIDA and implemented by the Climate Capacity Consortium comprising of CARE Danmark, DanChurchAid, IBIS, Climate Action Network International, International Institute for Environment and Development, Danish Organisation for Sustainable Energy, and the Danish 92 Group – Forum for Sustainable Development.

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