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■ **CAPACITATE, ACTIVATE, AMPLIFY**

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PHOTO: PIXABAY



Rice crops in the proposed sand dumping area of Banishanta Union

PHOTO: AFSANA AFRIN ESHA

A community buzzing with stories of resistance

The marginalized communities in the Banishanta union showcase immeasurable resilience

Afsana Afrin Esha, Md Hasibul Hasan and Mahabuba Hasan Lima

As part of the Catalytic Grant Programme, by the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD), Climate Justice Resilience Fund (CJRF), and Global Resilience Partnership (GRP), the resilient team is working on livelihood adaptation practices of marginalized communities in the Banishanta union, Dacope Upazila, Khulna. While collecting the research data from the field, the team came across a group of farmers with a lot to say. This

article showcases the stories of unheard voices from the union.

“Who are you? Where are you from?” asked the men distressfully. “Why do you people give wrong reports to your seniors?” The people from the union curiously asked the team all these questions. They also wanted to know: “It is for us that there is now a plan to dump the sand on our land. Why did you write that our land is infertile? Can’t you see the rice? Can’t you see the green? Does this look infertile to you?” We were completely surprised by their allegations and took the time to understand the situation. Getting a grasp of things, we calmed them down and introduced ourselves.

The hint of anger on their faces slowly changed to sadness. To upgrade Mongla port, there is a plan to dredge the Passur river under the ECNEC project and dump the sand on the farmlands of the Banishanta union. Around 3000-5000 people are dependent on these 300+ acres of double cropping fields for their income.

These people now spend sleepless nights, wondering whether their only source of livelihood will be gone in the name of development. The question still remains in people's minds: Why this agricultural land? Even though there are several options to dump this huge amount of dredging sand eg, the proposed airport and 6-lane road not so far from the Mongla port.

However, such struggles are not uncommon for them.

“ The people of Banishanta are survivors who are put back into the cycle of suffering once more ”

Many of them migrated from Mongla decades ago, due to land-grabbing issues, and settled here to live peacefully. They have also been victims of shrimp cultivation, forced by outsider elites and powerful opportunists. Overnight, their lands were turned saline and turned into ghers (shrimp farms). During that time, crop production in the region declined drastically.

Even homestead crops and vegetables died in high salinity. People suffered from poverty and fresh water scarcity for months. “When there was salt water here, per bigha land used to produce 5-7 tonnes of rice; now in the same land, we can cultivate 20-25 tonnes of rice,” says a farmer.

These people do not have much, but their collective power has driven shrimp cultivation out of the area. The region has changed drastically over the decade and the people have newer sources of livelihood, such as watermelon cultivation. After difficult, long fights, they have managed to come out of

the vicious cycle, but now the cycle has started once again.

For the past few years, the people of this area have been very worried about their agricultural land being filled with sand without any notice from the concerned authorities. News reports have been published to draw attention to the fact that this land is not infertile and unworthy of dumping sand, but no legal action has been taken.

“We are tired of these constant fighting,” says Dikolpo with a hopeless look on his face. They have been impacted by floods and cyclones such as Sidr, Aila, and Amphan over the years and now humans have put another challenge in front of them. As a developing country incited by helplessness, we often seem to neglect the long-term benefits for the short-term ones.

The Mongla port is heavily dependent on the farmers of the union. Every day they send thousands of tons of crops, vegetables, milk, and other items from here. To avoid spending more money on sand disposal, authorities might end up paying more in the long run.

The loss of conversion of this agricultural land to barren will be beyond anticipation. The farmers can earn Tk1,00,000-1,50,000 within 60-70 days with an investment of only Tk15,000 through watermelon cultivation. Who will be paying for this loss? The compensation proposed by the authority is Tk2,00,000/acre for ten years is nothing compared to the treasure the lands provide. This fertile land is like a mother to them, which they never want to lose.

The people of Banishanta are survivors who are put back into the cycle of suffering once more. The current situation is torment for them, living in the fear of losing everything at any time is a thought one cannot fathom for long. They know that they do not have much power, but that is not going to keep them down. The depth of resilience is as real as their hardships. No matter which situation they are put in, they collectively fight their way out. They will fight forever if they have to, but that is not going to scratch their spirit. They have set their hearts ablaze.

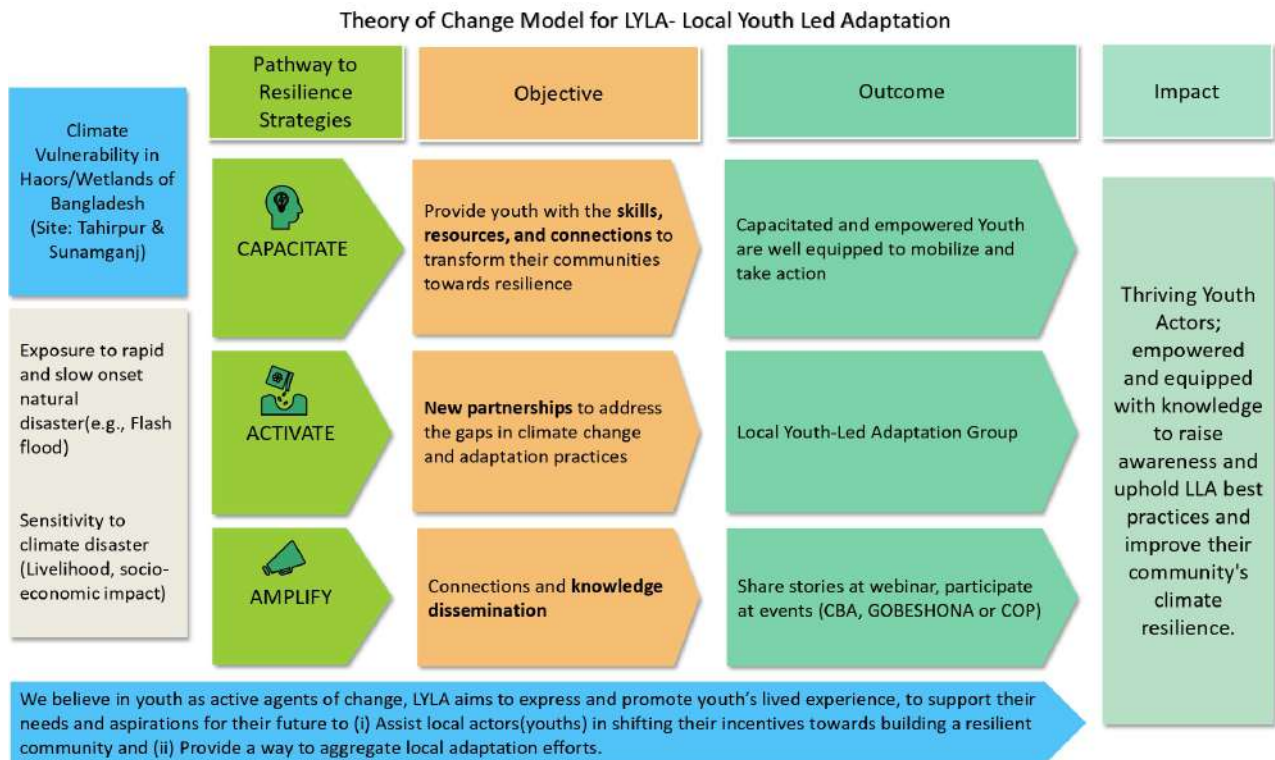
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Capacitate, activate, amplify

How the haors of Bangladesh are frequently excluded in terms of climate adaptation



The theory of change model of team LYLA's project intervention under Catalytic Grants- a joint effort from Climate Justice Resilience Fund (CJRF), GRP, and ICCCAD

Rukhsar Sultana, Juel Mahmud and Tabia Tasnim Anika

Like many other young professionals working in the sphere of climate change, we were delighted to take a chance on the Catalytic Grant Gobeshona Global Conference Phase-II opportunity. While we have always been enthusiastic about making a difference, the desire to empower and assist grassroots organizations, to pursue locally driven adaptation solutions is what drew us as team LYLA to the grant.

Our team explored a few potential ideas on how we want to utilize the funding; where we want to focus our efforts; and how we would combine the principles of Locally Led Adaptation (LLA), among other things, until we felt certain that we had a bold proposal that suited the phase-II of the

grant.

Initially, the group identified a climate financing shortfall, particularly in the community development of Bangladesh's haors (wetlands). Bangladesh's haors are likewise endangered due to the ongoing threat to their ecosystem as climate change has also had a significant influence on them (BDP2100). Flash floods devastate the region usually every two or three years (the floods in Sunamganj in the year 2022 bared witness), destroying its boro crops, which are the sole source of income for the majority of the people who live there.

While the social and economic aspects of those who live in the haors are hampered, putting the future of the generations at risk, our future local leaders must be prepared with skills, knowledge, technology, and networks to adapt to the local climatic climate and enhance their resilience. It is critical

to safeguard this region from additional loss in the face of climate change and heightened catastrophic risk.

In an increasingly perilous scenario with a big knowledge gap, particularly technological understanding for early warning of floods or flash floods, and low awareness of climate change, particularly among the haor region's young community, we designed the project Local Youth Led Adaptation (LYLA) leveraging our experience as skilled practitioners with training expertise, local youth mobilization, and adept research and communication skills.

The project has been formulated to capacitate, activate,

“The social and economic aspects of those who live in the haors are hampered”

and amplify resilience by (i) Assisting youth actors in shifting their incentives toward building a resilient community and (ii) Providing a way to aggregate local adaptation efforts.

Three of the eight Locally Led Adaptation principles, in particular Principle 2: Addressing structural inequities experienced by women, youth, children, handicapped and displaced persons, indigenous peoples, and marginalized ethnic groups; Principle 4: Investing in local competencies to leave a legacy, Principle 5: Developing a solid grasp of climate change risk and uncertainty, to empower and mobilize youths to take action, has been incorporated in project design.

Furthermore, the SDG-13 objective to “take immediate action to prevent climate change and its consequences” has been given high priority in the design of the framework and theory of change.

With the support from the Catalytic Grant Program, Climate Justice Resilient Fund (CJRF), Global Resilience Partnership

(GRP), and International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD), the team has formed a group of eight young individuals from Tahirpur and Sunamgang Upazilla. Initially, it was quite challenging to reach the specific group of participants at targeted areas as the haor people live with limited access to connectivities and information (road and internet).

The LYLA team circulated openings for participation through different social media as well as different youth networks, university and school networks and came up with the group. These groups are being capacitated with training interventions and mentorship, allowing them to raise awareness in their communities, and collect information and stories of how climate change is impacting their community. Currently, we are developing the training modules and mentoring material based on their understanding and local context and planning for specific outcomes that will help us to reach the overall goal of this project.

This exercise conducted by team LYLA seeks to capture lived experience and cultivate their community best practices carried forward for their climate resilience. As change-makers, they will be able to share their story and voice on local, national as well as global platforms and work with different youth networks.

The haors of Bangladesh are frequently disregarded in terms of climate adaptation interventions; effort is mostly centred in the country's south; due to ongoing saline intrusion, cyclone prevalence, and other discourse. Additionally, the potential of youth as prominent players in the battle against climate change is discussed but seldom implemented.

The talks during this year's Second Gobeshona Global Conference (2022) and at some of the COP27 side events broadly aroused the potential of youth in accelerating LLA best practices. As a team, we are putting our thoughts and efforts towards harnessing local youths' innate inventive ability by offering chances to build solutions and contribute to community resilience through the seed funding of this catalytic grant we have been awarded.

We seek to come back in a year to weigh how much our strategic pathways have resulted in the outcomes we seek to draw from our project LYLA.

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PHOTO: UNSPLASH

Waste: The one with waste recycling

How an adaptive strategy in Uganda could be transferred to help with climate change in Bangladesh

Hamida Akter, Sarah Nandudu, and Zakia Sultana

People who are the most affected by climate change worldwide produce most of the creative adaptation strategies. Since local people have the knowledge, they can be regarded as primary decision-makers, and these solutions are locally-led. However, those people frequently lack the economic resources and power to implement their unique ideas.

Locally-led adaptation strategies not only mean community engagement but involve the local people to develop a solution for their existing problems, which are suitable and efficient for the poorest and most vulnerable people in the face of climate change.

We studied the transferable adaptation strategies of informal settlements in Uganda. Through a small grant jointly funded by the Climate Justice Resilient Fund (CJRF), and Global Resilience Partnership (GRP) and implemented by International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) at the “Gobeshona Global Conference I,” we started our investigation into the adaptation strategies on common issues such as waste management, income-generating activities, and so on.

Not all the solutions can be applied to all places as those can be location specific. Common interest in environmental issues was one of the motivations for us to work as a team. Because of the importance of waste management, we chose this topic in particular.

In informal settlements, people live in small spaces. Unnecessary garbage makes the place smaller. Moreover, the drainage channels get blocked with plastics and other wastes, and water blockage becomes frequent.

That is why people are concerned about this issue and trying to tackle the problem through low-cost local strategies.

In Bangladesh, the waste management scenario is very poor in the slum areas. We shared the cost-effective management activities with the local government, which could be easily implemented in the informal settlements.

During the study, challenges identified could be different levels and backgrounds of the team members, the language barrier, and the Covid -19 pandemic. Due to the lockdowns, an empirical study was not possible.

“To build resilience among the informal settlers in Bangladesh, proactive interaction, coordination, and collaboration among various actors are a must”

However, we could overcome those challenges using various online platforms such as Zoom, WhatsApp, E-mail, and Microsoft Teams. Using these media, we became connected, which reduced the barriers between us.

Another challenge was to ensure the participation of the local government personnel in the dissemination session due to the bureaucratic process. Through Zoom meetings, we were able to connect with the local government personnel who could carry out the shared knowledge to the slum communities of Bangladesh.

In May 2021, we conducted two webinars with the community leaders, and they shared their experiences and challenges of working with the poor slum dwellers of Uganda. The communities they work with are mainly overpopulated, and people mostly have left their places of origin to earn livelihoods.

During Covid-19, poor people worked together for their livelihood. They have created saving groups for economic empowerment and encourage group members for other activities related to climate and environmental issues.

Sarah Nandudu, a community leader, has been working with the informal communities. She said: “And people once were taught the methodology of savings, they just come, and we do not call people to come. They come to put their money

together for better use.”

Besides savings, people share their problems and find a solution together. Through their savings after the lockdown period, they provided incentives like sewing machines to make masks and taught how to prepare liquid soaps.

Two of Uganda’s significant climate change-related issues are prolonged drought and heavy rainfall. So the government has conducted vast research activities through agricultural research organizations to discover drought and flood-resistant crops.

However, these activities are shared with a limited number of people who are directly affected and interested in agricultural farming. In terms of resilience practices, the supported communities have been adapting several measures regarding the challenges they face due to climate change.

“Actually, the communities get flooded because of our own generated waste. So, then we realized that we’re the problems, and we should get solutions,” said Sarah.

To get rid of these problems the government does not have enough resources to support them. So the community people themselves engage in activities such as tree plantation, planting drought- and flood-resistant crops, and managing wastes to reduce environmental damage. They solved their flooding problem with general cleaning activity but at a small scale because poor waste disposal is one of the main reasons drainage blocking occurs which eventually results in flooding.

One of the mobilizers Edris from Kyebando Settlement, Kawempe Division, Kampala shared his experience of how they supported slum dwellers in waste management practices:

“So we’ve supported the groups to do projects for waste management that are dealing with waste management, in particular, that means we’re reducing waste at a micro level, at home state levels where we can make sure that now people look at waste as a business.”

Moreover, they had done awareness campaigns on climate change issues about preserving natural resources and how to manage the solid wastes generated within the informal settlements. Not only do they physically adapt to an adverse situation, but they also have a mindset to cope with the challenges.

Through this research, we identified the feasible locally-led adaptation strategies in the context of Bangladesh. All these common adaptive strategies can be transferred to other informal settlements. To build resilience among the informal settlers in Bangladesh, proactive interaction, coordination, and collaboration among various actors are a must.

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The theory of change model of team LYLA's project intervention under Catalytic Grants- a joint effort from Climate Justice Resilience Fund (CJRF), GRP, and ICCCAD PHOTO: UNSPLASH

Catalytic grants

Opportunities, challenges, and inspiration to enable locally-led adaptation action

Shuchi Vora

Dr Zakia Sultana is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Environmental Science and Disaster Management at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Science and Technology University, Bangladesh. She was the recipient of a Catalytic Grants award that is implemented by ICCCAD in partnership with GRP and CJRF. Her grant project was to foster knowledge exchange between rag-picking communities of South Asia and Africa, and she partnered with colleagues from SDI in Africa to execute this project. Zakia treated this grant as seed funding for a longer-term project.

Zakia's efforts are but a drop in a large ocean of knowledge, leadership, and energy that is waiting to be surfaced in the communities of the majority world or the Global South. Locally-led adaptation initiatives, knowledge exchange, and learning initiatives do not augur well for large-scale conventional implementation or research projects. Action research at the most local scales requires funding mechanisms to enable and catalyze change, and knowledge exchange, and foster leadership of the grantees in the process.

Catalytic grants

Historically, adaptation and resilience have been underfunded, and most of that funding meant for the Global South has been

directed toward researchers and practitioners in the Global North. Conventional projects have been executed through parachute research and implementation, with little focus on learning, capacity building, and knowledge exchange among the actors in the Global South.

The Principles of Locally Led Adaptation (LLA), of which GRP is one of the founding signatories, articulate the need to shift this agency to the most at-risk communities, including youth, women and other genders, and indigenous peoples. The need for patient funding has been cited as a principle for LLA to ensure this shift in an agency.

While the Catalytic Grants do not offer patient funding in terms of time, they attempt to reimagine how grant-making for small grants can catalyze the capacities of leaders in the Global South to obtain such patient funding. Through knowledge exchange, capacity building, peer-to-peer learning, and building communities of practice, the catalytic grants have attracted cohorts of strong southern voices who build on existing knowledge among the communities they work with.

“ The catalytic grants have attracted cohorts of strong southern voices who build on existing knowledge among the communities they work with ”

Catalytic Grants were initiated in 2021 in the first edition of the online Gobeshona conference by the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCAD) in partnership with the Climate Justice Resilience Fund (CJRF) and Global Resilience Partnership (GRP). Their objective has been to catalyze collaboration across events such as Gobeshona, Community-based Adaptation (CBA) conference, and Conference of the Parties (COP) Resilience Hubs among Southern leaders.

The grant-making process is intensive in terms of time and human resources invested. The cohorts share progress over monthly calls, undergo capacity-building workshops, and contribute to knowledge exchange through alumni networks. In addition to that, their voices are amplified in policy, and efforts are celebrated through events at the milestone conferences.

Learning and reflections

On grantmaking:

The grant-making format of catalytic grants can be

challenging. These are grants that run between events, and therefore, last for about a year. They are also small pots of money, which incur high transaction costs in managing multiple installments and holding financial accountability in the process. The biggest challenge is the difficulty to transfer money to certain countries despite the great quality of proposals we receive from those countries.

Despite all of these challenges, we are learning from every cycle. Our objective is to reduce the efforts of the managing team while not compromising on the efficacy of the grants. We want to ensure that the money and the time of the grantees are used in delivering the results rather than assuming the burden of reporting for the funds. Thus, we try to manage results rather than track detailed progress.

On tracking progress:

These small grants are not meant to demonstrate what conventional project management considers as impacts. These grants, therefore, don't measure indicators but rather ensure that the funds act as a catalyst to foster learning while acknowledging the existing leadership of grant winners. While the lack of indicators to track impacts or outcomes can be perceived as a limitation, these grants instead surface creativity, and innovation and therefore catalyze change from the bottom up.

On learning exchanges and communities of practice:

The biggest learning from these catalytic grants is the role of the communities of practice that have emerged out of the cohorts of grantees. ICCAD has catalyzed these communities of practice through monthly calls. GRP has drawn on the experts from the Resilience Knowledge Coalition and has fostered learning through storytelling workshops, sessions on learning and MEL, and panel discussions between grantees and experts at Gobeshona, CBA, and COP Resilience Hub. These events have acted as spaces of learning and reflection for not just the grantees but the larger partnership and the coalition members on the role of LLA initiatives, local knowledge, and leadership in adaptation and resilience.

Zakia, in one of her presentations to a global audience, said, “The grants might be local in nature, but they have global ramifications. In changing the way projects are executed through bottom-up approaches and Southern experts, these projects address local needs while shifting the global funding landscape.”

While we at GRP are acutely aware of how far we have to go to influence the funding landscape for adaptation and resilience, we are glad that these small grants are making dents in an otherwise challenging landscape of adaptation and resilience funding, especially for locally-led action and local leadership.

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Mainstreaming climate services into higher education in Bangladesh

The efforts from Bangladesh Academy for Climate Services (BACS) through ARA Micro-Grant for Bridging the Climate Information Gap for Adaptation

These programs look to develop and integrate topics on climate services into university-level curriculum

ADAPTATION RESEARCH FOR IMPACT PRINCIPLES

DRIVEN BY USER NEEDS
Aim to deliver practical and realistic solutions that make a positive impact in building resilience.

IMPACT-FOCUSED AND MEASURABLE
Collaborate with users on research impact metrics so outcomes can be measured according to their needs and challenges.

CO-PRODUCED WITH KNOWLEDGE HOLDERS
Design research with traditional, local, and Indigenous expertise and collaborate with those who will use solutions in practice.

EQUITABLE IN PRACTICE
Recognise social inequities as a cause of vulnerability and encourage a voice for all in adaptation decision making.

EVOLVING AND FLEXIBLE
Learn while doing so that real-time lessons of what works and what does not can strengthen adaptation practices despite uncertainties.

SUSTAINABLE OVER TIME
Build local capacity and knowledge sharing so that innovation and more effective solutions for adaptation can emerge over time.

Adaptation Research for Impact Principles have been designed by the ARA to better align and link knowledge to action

SOURCE: SOUTHSOUTHNORTH WEBSITE

Tasfia Tasnim

Adaptation Research Alliance (ARA) micro-grants initiative

The global collaborative effort, Adaptation Research Alliance (ARA), was launched at COP26 with a vision for action-orientated research to inform effective adaptation for vulnerable communities, through a diverse group of partners and collaborators where funders, researchers, and practitioners are working together to co-create, innovate, and develop solutions. The Adaptation Research for Impact Principles focuses on addressing the barriers to action research, such as -- a disconnection between research, actions, and needs; duplication of efforts in adaptation research; misaligned incentives and institutional barriers; and limited learning from implementation, by better aligning and linking the knowledge to action.

With the purpose of addressing burning adaptation issues, particularly for developing countries, through knowledge and research, the ARA launched its micro-grants call in November 2021. The idea was to enable access to financial, technical, and collaborative support for driving country-level small-scale initiatives. A total of 25 projects in Africa, Asia, and Latin America have been awarded by the ARA micro-grants initiative.

Insights from the micro-grantee BACS on the need for identification and coproduction of curriculum on climate services

While Bangladesh is renowned for constantly improving adaptation capacity, much of the focus has concentrated on long-term climate change scenarios and short-term weather forecasts; less so on the use of past, present and short- to medium-range future climate information. Prior activities

and discussions related to climate services in Bangladesh had highlighted that there is a gap between the producers and users of climate information. Many users are not aware of the full range of climate information available. Even when they are, they often lack the knowledge and skills to understand and use the information (past, present, short-, medium- and long-term future) in ways that can help support locally-led adaptation, loss, and damage, etc. To address this gap, the Bangladesh Academy for Climate Services (BACS) co-founded by International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD), International Research Institute for Climate and Society (IRI) at Columbia University, International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) and Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) partnered with selected faculties from five universities across Bangladesh (Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh Agricultural University, Independent University, Bangladesh and Patuakhali Science and Technology University) to design a project which aimed at co-producing climate services. Through a participatory approach, this consortium developed a shared understanding of climate services and its potential for various climate-sensitive sectors and identified the needs, gaps, and opportunities to integrate the topic into the university-level curriculum.

Strategies and approaches supporting the co-creation process

Throughout this project, the BACS co-founders created an environment enabling all the professors to develop ownership of the project and feel comfortable sharing their voice in activities through participatory learnings and group exercises. The BACS team offered introductory presentations on climate services to ensure a common basis



A part of BACS team with the professors during the in-person co-production workshop held on 16 March 2022

PHOTO: FARAH ANZUM, ICCCAD

of understanding and encouraged the professors to actively engage in the discussion. Though most of the meetings and workshops were held virtually due to the duration and size of the funding, the BACS team organized a one-day-long in-person workshop for participatory group exercises to enhance engagement and strengthen personal connections. Professors shared perspectives from their different backgrounds, helping the group reflect on the subject from different angles, which further guided the joint definition of topics on climate services across various universities' curriculum. The enthusiasm from the professors, the diversity of the group, value addition by the BACS co-founders acted as enabling factors in this regard. Once the scope, needs, gaps, and opportunities of integrating

“ To inspire participants to take on locally-led actions, they must be engaged in a co-production process from the beginning in a transparent manner ”

climate services topics in the university-level curriculum had been analyzed, the group designed a detailed roadmap with short-, medium-, and long-term action points.

Key lessons and elements for undertaking a successful co-production process

Key lessons for undertaking a successful co-production process include: Firstly, the involvement of multiple stakeholders with a wide range of backgrounds, perspectives, and expertise. The BACS team provided technical expertise on climate services: Information producer (BMD) with training from relevant experts on the 4 pillars of climate services (IRI), information translator and working with the user (CIMMYT), and knowledge broker (ICCCAD). The professors offered a wide range of backgrounds (science, social science, environment) and experience (junior, mid-level, and senior) -- which helped to bring in different important perspectives to the table.

Secondly, dealing with a common burning problem -- in this case, the lack of skills and knowledge on climate services.

Thirdly, investing in social capital: Requires a strong community build-up where everyone can work for a common cause. In this case, the BACS team targeted specific professors from the selected five universities and developed activities aiming to promote the development of a team relationship and trust among the professors.

Lastly, enabling a good environment to make the co-production process effective: The activities consisted of a mix of a few foundational short lectures and a number of participatory and group exercises, and also planned sufficient time to hear reflections from the professors.

Co-production and transparency are critical to a successful microgrant process. To inspire participants to take on locally-led actions, they must be engaged in a co-production process from the beginning in a transparent manner. Group participants must be diverse, motivated, and have a targeted focus. We acknowledge that microgrants should be implemented over a relatively short period of time to create momentum, but there is a need for the second phase of seed funding to continue the process for at least 2-3 years to make that initiative sustainable. Moreover, it is also important to offer simple and fast financial procedures and processes, which was true in this ARA microgrant. Overall, open communication between facilitators and the targeted community is critical to implement all the activities successfully in a microgrant process without skipping any important steps.

Way forward to make the efforts sustainable

The ARA Microgrant demonstrated that our process and activities are ways to bridge this critical gap for the successful identification of climate service topics to be added to the national and local university curriculum. Not only did the microgrant achieve all its goals and deliverables, but as a side benefit, it also helped build professor capacity in understanding the importance of climate services. Professors were able to analyze and design climate services content that could be developed and implemented at multiple universities under future funding. The next phase of funding would allow the team to include further voices and stakeholders in the process, as well as collaborate on the development of climate service content for integration into the university curriculum, to enable training of future climate scientists and practitioners for improved use of climate services across climate-sensitive sectors.

NB: This article is produced with inputs from Ashley Curtis and Melody Braun, IRI, Columbia University.

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