



PRESS RELEASE

June 13, 2017

A new approach to climate narratives research in the Global South: findings from pilot project in India

Renewables are the clean energy source that will free us and our children from disease and dependence on imports. Relying on the abundance of nature, renewables draw energy from the sun, water and the wind to provide us and our children health, self-reliance, prosperity and modernity while restoring harmony and natural balance.

This is how one of the solutions to climate change can be effectively communicated in India and possibly similar countries. This was revealed in ground-breaking research conducted in India to test language and messages on climate change. Funded by the Minor Foundation, the Global Narratives Project is a message testing research project run by Climate Outreach and Climate Action Network International (CAN-I). The project pilot was delivered in India, with the collaboration of Climate Action Network South Asia (CANSAs). This qualitative research methodology goes beyond the traditional focus group format and asks searching questions about people's values, identity and hopes for the future.

"The Movement needs to step up communicating Climate Change to people. Many audiences still didn't grasp what climate change is, if they did they would be losing sleep over it," said CAN-I Director Wael Hmaidan. "Climate change is science based and communication around it should also be evidence-based. We hope that these narratives derived from research can improve climate change communication in several countries, not just India."

To communicate 100% renewable energy, the report guides communicators to provide evidence that the transition is achievable. In the context of India, people were skeptical because their experience with renewables was marred with poorly designed small-scale projects like solar cookers. To overcome this skepticism, communicators must demonstrate the feasibility of transitioning to 100% renewables with success stories while stressing the fact that it is a rapidly improving technology, continuously becoming cheaper, more effective and reliable.

The project consisted in training a group of people from civil society organization members of CANSAs to test narratives and messaging through narrative workshops with local audiences following a standardized script to test values, identity and attitudes. After receiving the training, the six local partners - Centre for Environment and Communication, Change Alliance, Inseada, Centre for Environment and Education,

Development Alternatives and Indian Youth Climate Network - ran 16 narrative workshops with 154 participants.

“The findings were remarkable”, said CANSA’s Program Manager Santosh Patnaik. “Contrary to common perceptions that have guided climate communications in the past, people in India disliked terms such as ‘dirty energy’ to describe fossil fuels and rejected the idea that they should wait for solutions to come from other countries. They accepted personal responsibility and said that joint action that emphasizes togetherness is guaranteed to lead us to solutions.”

“The findings also pointed to the need to embed national pride and identity in climate communication, emphasizing that India is capable of overcoming climate change as it is doing for poverty, and can rely on its own resources and does not need help from the outside. The people with whom the narratives were tested also rejected blame games and words like ‘justice’ pointing to the fact that we might need to change the labels we usually adopt such as ‘climate justice’,” he added.

The Indian pilot provides a proof of concept: that national level organisations can conduct qualitative research using a rigorous methodology to a high standard with limited resources and relatively quickly. Ideally, the Global Narratives method would be replicated and further developed in other countries. Ultimately, the ambition is that all people, in every country, are able to relate to climate change through language that speaks to their distinct concerns, values, and cultural identity such that they can understand the issues and feel motivated to take action. This project is the first step towards that wider ambition.

“Everybody has a right to be heard on climate change, and a right to understand it in terms of their own values”, believes Climate Outreach Project Director George Marshall. “But the existing communications research is hugely unbalanced and enormously favours the developed world, especially the United States. This then shapes public engagement by scientists, environmental organisations and the United Nations, which all project the values of the Global North. Our programme was the first time that anybody had tested different climate messages in India and, even on this small scale, shows the enormous potential for shaping a distinctly Indian narrative around climate change and renewables.”

More findings are outlined in the reports attached that are currently being disseminated widely within the climate and communications community. Reports are available here:

<http://www.climatenetwork.org/publication/communicating-climate-change-india>

<http://www.climatenetwork.org/publication/global-narratives-climate-change-new-approach-public-engagement-research>

If you would like to find out more about the project and the results, please join our webinar on 20 June at 3pm BST. [Click here to register for the webinar.](#)

For more information, contact:

Hala Kilani

Senior Communications Officer campaigns - Climate Action Network

Email: hkilani@climatenetwork.org Tel: +961 3 567928

Senashia Ekanayake

Communications Officer, Climate Action Network South Asia

Email: senashia@cansouthasia.net Tel: +94772525823

Leane de Laigue

Head of Communications, Climate Outreach

Email: leanedelaigne@climateoutreach.org Tel: +44 1865 403 334