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# Climate and Development Knowledge Brokers Workshop

Eschborn, Germany  
3-5 June 2011

**Workshop summary:  
overview and key outcomes**



## The challenge

Access to reliable information, and the ability to share lessons and experience, are key ingredients in tackling climate change. This is a particular priority for developing countries, where the dual challenges of climate change and development are closely intertwined.

Over the past decade, numerous websites, portals and online platforms have been set up to take on this 'knowledge brokerage' role, and more are being launched every year. But the 'knowledge infrastructure' within the climate and development sector is still weak. There are many data and information gaps, and many of the knowledge sharing initiatives that exist operate in isolation from each other, risking duplication of effort and the 'reinvention of wheels'.

Many initiatives are also fragile and under-resourced; it is often easier to fund new initiatives than to build on those already there. This leads to a phenomenon we dubbed 'portal proliferation syndrome'.<sup>1</sup> Most importantly, it is often hard for potential users of climate change information to make sense of what's out there. Where do you go? Who do you trust? How can be sure you're getting the most relevant and up-to-date information?

## The objectives

The hypothesis behind the workshop was that closer collaboration between existing initiatives is an important way to address this challenge: "Surely we can do this job better if we are talking to each other?"

The specific objectives were to:

- build bridges between and within the development, climate adaptation, climate mitigation and climate finance worlds, and between global and regional initiatives
- find out about the approaches being taken and the niches that different initiatives fill
- compare notes on the challenges we face
- discuss modalities for closer collaboration and assess which would be most effective
- agree concrete steps to take the collaboration agenda forward.

## The event

The workshop was convened by CDKN, GIZ and PIK-Potsdam, and held at the GIZ offices in Eschborn. It was organised for the weekend before the June 2011 UNFCCC climate talks in Bonn, enabling people to attend both events. Thirty-five participants from 21 web initiatives (13 global and 8 regional) attended. These cut across climate sub-sectors, so managers of adaptation portals met with counterparts covering low carbon growth, and those from climate finance initiatives interacted with colleagues covering ecosystem services or wider development issues.

The format was highly participatory. Each initiative was asked to prepare PowerPoint presentations in advance, but to 'leave them at the door'. They were uploaded to a shared web space,<sup>2</sup> hosted by OpenEI, to provide a publically accessible reference point.

The first day focused on mapping existing initiatives (see 'Mapping the portals' box), understanding demand better, and sharing challenges. The second day asked 'how can we collaborate better?' After an initial visioning exercise, participants explored different modalities of collaboration and discussed in concrete terms what should we do together, both on a one-to-one basis and as a group.

<sup>1</sup> <http://cdkn.org/2011/06/portal-proliferation-syndrome/>

<sup>2</sup> [http://en.openei.org/wiki/Knowledge\\_Brokers\\_Workshop](http://en.openei.org/wiki/Knowledge_Brokers_Workshop)

## Mapping the portals

A key part of the workshop was an exercise to map the initiatives present – who is doing what, how, and for whom? Participants rated their initiatives under the following categories: purpose, content type, subject focus, audience/geographic focus, editorial approach, and technology/delivery approach. They characterised their initiative against 64 separate criteria, giving a score to indicate how important that aspect was – from 0 (not relevant) to 3 (our most important aspect).

The exercise produced a wealth of data about existing climate information portals. These will be useful for helping portals establish who they can work with, where they can establish a niche, and where there are gaps in information provision.

The full workshop report contains more details of the methodology used and the findings.

## Achievements

- **Getting this group together** was a first; there's not been anything quite like it before. Many participants noted how valuable it was to broaden their networks, and there was a clear desire to build on the goodwill and momentum created.
- We did a **baseline survey** of who knows who, and who is already collaborating with whom. This will be repeated in six months' time to see how collaborative networks have evolved.
- We constructed a **detailed knowledge map**, in the form of a matrix, of who's doing what, how, and for which target audiences. This will be a useful source documents, both for participants and others.
- The session on **understanding user demand** was particularly appreciated, as everyone recognises this as a weak spot. And the session on **sharing challenges** showed how much we have to learn from each other.

## Reflections

- **Collaboration can happen at many levels.** Just knowing about each other is a start; creating mechanisms to share experiences is the next step. Setting up a joint search facility is relatively easy these days, so rather than being left to the mercy of Google, users can be offered an intelligent search of a subset of recommended climate websites.
- Moving up the scale, there are several **automated content-sharing options** which allow websites to take interesting content from other sites and present it to their users.
- **Sharing platforms** with other partners is one of the closest forms of collaboration, and several participants offer this service.
- These approaches can go a long way towards treating the worst effects of portal proliferation syndrome. We agreed that too much collaboration could actually be detrimental, since an element of competition is what keeps innovation moving on the web. Participants adopted the phrase '**constructive co-opetition**' to describe what might be optimal.

## Next steps

- Through the workshop, we have established an informal **Climate Knowledge Brokers Group** to build on the momentum generated by the workshop. A steering group has been established to coordinate this.
- This group will **keep sharing and talking**. An email list has been created and the existing online space on OpenEI will be used to share files.
- **Four joint projects were identified**, which will: progress the 'Linked Open Data' concept (via a workshop/webinar); develop a 'portal-of-portals' to signpost what's out there; expand the use of the **reegle shared search** facility and glossary;<sup>3</sup> and explore a possible project on shared metadata standards, including analysis of existing standards.
- The group will take **three discussion areas** forward: usage and impact monitoring; communicating uncertainty around climate change; and approaches to adaptation/mitigation.
- Many **specific follow-up actions** were agreed between individual initiatives (42 in total).
- **We will meet again in a year's time** – in Germany, around the time of the June 2012 Bonn UNFCCC meetings. Regional versions of the workshop might also be useful if there is interest.

### Find out more...

For more information about the workshop, and the Climate Knowledge Brokers Group that has been established to take this collaborative agenda forward, visit:  
[http://en.openei.org/wiki/Knowledge\\_Brokers\\_Workshop](http://en.openei.org/wiki/Knowledge_Brokers_Workshop)

To read the full workshop report, visit:  
[http://en.openei.org/wiki/Knowledge\\_Brokers\\_Workshop-Report](http://en.openei.org/wiki/Knowledge_Brokers_Workshop-Report)



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<sup>3</sup> See: [www.reegle.info](http://www.reegle.info)