



2013/14: Issue 1

In this issue of *From Evidence to Action*, we focus on communication for research uptake, which, as we highlight in our Feature article, is not a straightforward subject to get to grips with. For our **Feature** we spoke to Amit Makan, Research Uptake Manager at the Programme for Improving Mental Health (PRIME) about institutional arrangements aimed at enhancing research uptake and successful communication with policymakers. Our **Case study** highlights the research uptake strategies at Strive in the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. We shine our **Spotlight** on a relatively new regional network, the Zimbabwe Evidence Informed Policy Network (ZEIPNET) where you can join up on their Facebook page and participate in their science cafes and policy dialogues. As always, our resources section collates information on events, training, associations, toolkits and guidelines.

Please let us know about any new regional networks so that we can profile them in the next issue of our newsletter. *From Evidence to Action* aims to stimulate debate around evidence-informed policy-making. If you have stories or case studies around research uptake and evidence informed policymaking, please send your submission to vfichardt@hsrc.ac.za

PROGRAMME FOR IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH CARE (PRIME):

Evidence on scaling up mental health services for development



Prof. Vikram Patel
PRIME Research Director

“The most exciting thing about PRIME is the fact that Ministries of Health in five countries, and the WHO, have joined mental health research leaders as equal partners .”

Page 2



Communicating for research uptake – lessons from the field

In this issue

- Feature article: PRIME - Research uptake in the field of mental health _____ 1
- Case study: STRIVE – research uptake for HIV prevention _____ 3
- Spotlight on: The Zimbabwe Evidence Informed Policy Network _____ 5
- Selected Toolkits and guidelines _____ 6
- Resources _____ 7

Led from the University of Cape Town, the Programme for Improving Mental health care (PRIME) is a consortium of research institutions and Ministries of Health in five low-and middle-income countries in Africa and Asia (Ethiopia, South Africa, Uganda, India & Nepal), with global partners including the WHO, Centre for Global Mental Health (incorporating London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine and Kings Health Partners, UK) and international NGO's such as BasicNeeds, Healthnet TPO and Sangath.

PRIME's goals are 1) to develop evidence on the implementation and scaling-up of mental health treatment in primary and maternal health care, in low resource settings and 2) to enhance the uptake of its research evidence amongst key policy partners and relevant stakeholders.

With the support of DFID, the first meeting of the then proposed consortium brought together global mental health stakeholders to develop a formal proposal. Stakeholders included research institutions, representatives from Ministries of Health in PRIME countries, and international NGOs. The meeting resulted in the conception of a 'user-informed' research programme consortium responsive to political priorities, creating an enabling environment for getting research into policy and practice, and importantly, stimulating the demand for the programme's research.

Within the first year of the RPC, a cross-country Research Uptake Strategy was completed with the inputs of all country and cross-country consortium partners, including researchers and policy makers. A host of opportunities for input were made available to consortium partners, including at the 1st Annual Meeting in South Africa, via regular email drafts of the strategy, and after presenting a consolidated, detailed cross-country strategy at PRIME's 2nd Annual Meeting in Uganda.

The latest draft of the Research Uptake Strategy identifies the objectives, maps the cross-country context using a Stakeholder

Analysis tool, selects the most strategic communication methods across countries, and includes an M&E Framework and detailed indicators for qualitatively and quantitatively evaluating the impact of the research communications and uptake.

Through the setup of the research programme consortium, and research uptake strategy consultations, PRIME has stimulated the demand for research evidence on the best ways of scaling-up mental health services, for maternal and primary health care contexts, in low-and middle-income countries. In addition, PRIME regularly invites all stakeholders, including policy makers, to make suggestions and comment on communication outputs, which aids policy makers to obtain the necessary political support at higher levels.

As PRIME approaches the middle of the 6 year RPC life-cycle when the number of research outputs amongst research partners will intensify, PRIME aims to further implement the Research Uptake Strategy by increasing the *supply* of packaged research outputs (such as policy briefs and fact sheets) in a user-relevant manner, in



order to enhance the uptake of its research amongst policy makers, and policy implementers.

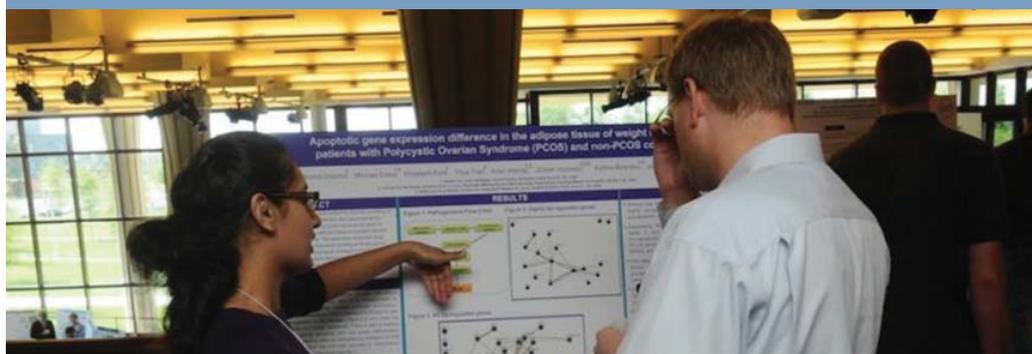
We spoke to Amit Makan, who is responsible for research uptake in the project to gain more insight into PRIME's approach to research uptake.

Amit highlighted the importance of regular meetings among researchers and policymakers. In this project all parties have been involved from the outset which makes communication easier.

Initially the five partner countries submitted a joint research policy proposal. The relationship is now institutionalised, and there is a commitment to the funders that policymakers and researchers will meet annually. Amit suggests that research is more likely to be taken up under this kind of institutional arrangement.

As far as the value of policy briefs go, Amit says that while their impact is difficult to measure at this early stage, they are useful for engaging the media and policymakers. PRIME's CEO Crick Lund is a member of the Mental Health Technical Advisory Committee to the Minister of Health in South Africa, and often carries such policy briefs with him for the purposes of

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engagement at these meetings. In time the number of 'hits' on this section of the site will provide more insight into how well the policy briefs are received online.

Also of value has been the extensive inputs on the policy briefs from Department of Health, many of whom have provided sentence-by-sentence qualitative feedback. This input from policymakers into the format of the policy briefs is appreciated, and it is

instructive that the language could be even plainer. This kind of feedback is useful, especially given the close relationship the consortium partners enjoy.

At PRIME the policy brief process is lead and facilitated by Amit himself as head of research uptake and he works closely with researchers. Researchers tend to be busy and his role is one of knowledge translation through communicating in simpler

English. Amit leads and facilitates the writing process for policy briefs, including the design and production, in close collaboration with the researchers.

For more information about PRIME go to their website at <http://www.prime.uct.ac.za/> or contact PRIME's Research Uptake Manager Amit Makan at a.makan@uct.ac.za

CASE STUDY: STRIVE



STRIVE is a research consortium investigating the social norms and inequalities that drive HIV.

STRIVE is a research consortium investigating the social norms and inequalities that drive HIV. Thirty years into the AIDS epidemic, science shows that certain methods work to prevent and treat the virus. And yet this has not stopped the spread of HIV. More and better evidence is needed on how structural forces increase vulnerability to HIV and on the interventions that work, in practice, to address them.

the field can appreciate this, it's difficult to shift from a one-track specialisation - in research, programming, policy or financing - to work across sectors and disciplines. We see our own institutions as the starting point - encouraging each other as research organisations to include questions about violence and gender in studies of alcohol, for instance, so that we can avoid working in a "silo" and understand the causal

engaging with end-users and allies; documenting processes and change over time as well as results.

What is your role in the research process?

My role is to lead and support a STRIVE Knowledge into Action team, comprised of a hands-on KiA team member within each partner in our consortium, along with a more senior support person to ensure buy-in from the whole organisation. I work with team members to develop a KiA strategy for each particular study within the STRIVE portfolio.

For our case study we interview Annie Holmes Director of Research Uptake and Influence who is a member of the Knowledge into Action team about their approach to communication for research uptake.



Can you give us some background to what STRIVE aims to achieve?

STRIVE has a fairly ambitious mandate, which is to shift the discourse and thinking about HIV prevention to more of structural. Especially in a moment when we have evidence of the potential of biomedical solutions, it's crucial to address the socio-economic factors that shape vulnerability to infection and that block effective prevention efforts, old and new. While many in

pathways between factors rather than each factor in isolation.

Research uptake is another aspect of the cultural shift we aim to effect within our own partnership and then more widely - moving beyond the classic dissemination model towards developing a strategy to put Knowledge into Action (our term for RU) from the very start of any project - setting KiA objectives; mapping, prioritising and

We have found it useful to start with the question: how could this piece of work make a difference in the world? While a project's theory of change sets out how to reach the objectives of the intervention and/or research study, we have to look beyond that point to set the research uptake goal - what's the best way to ensure the effective use of the (future) findings? There's no simple blue print. Every case is different. So our role in research uptake is to think strategically - understand the context, where the openings are and how best to make the connections. It involves a lot more listening than presenting. We need to ask the right questions of researchers, implementers/programmers, policy makers, NGOs and

so on. Thinking about “policy” in a generic sense can blind us to considering the different levels and users for best impact. Our most strategic audiences might be:

- local or district-level regulation (rather than national-level policy)
- donor funding criteria
- programmes and interventions
- research priorities, frameworks, methodologies and practice

We are also using the supply and demand model - policy makers can “supply” wonderful laws and regulations but often we also need to engage with civil society and community “users” to ensure there is also “demand” and use. Research organisations are not likely to be best placed or best skilled to do direct advocacy, which can be seen as compromising neutrality. So part of our job is to identify allies who can take up and use the learning from research projects.

Engaging with specific end-users helps us to identify and then address both their interests in using the research and the barriers to their doing so. This helps us be strategic and targeted in what we document and how and where we present it.

In short, we need ideas and energetic discussion within our organisations about how change happens in any field and context.

You developed a very useful one-pager <http://strive.lshtm.ac.uk/sites/strive.lshtm.ac.uk/files/projects/GlobalPrevalenceViolenceOnePage.pdf> for the report, *Global and regional estimates of violence against women*. How do you go about it? it must be quite a complex task to synthesise a report of that scale.

This particular one-pager was easier than many because we adapted information from our study partner, WHO. We are about to embark on knowledge packs for particular “drivers” of HIV - probably beginning with alcohol, and then focusing on transactional sex and other aspects. Like our measurement briefs - see <http://strive.lshtm.ac.uk/news/working-towards-more-accurate-research-hiv-stigma> - this kind

of document is a collaboration between different experts in our teams - those who know the subject, evidence and field very thoroughly and those who stand in for the end users (as any editor does). It's a bit of a tug of war, actually - the academics ringing their hands about rigour and the simple-language types (like me) slashing away at conditional clauses and qualifications, muttering “less is more”!

It's early days yet, so I'm hesitant to claim any big contribution but I feel we've made a good start on this journey. A sign of success for me has been that one of our partners, KHPT, now ensures that every study they work on involves a Theory of Change process and a thorough research uptake strategy designed by the full project team.

At <http://strive.lshtm.ac.uk/sites/strive.lshtm.ac.uk/files/WHO%20VAW%20Infographic.pdf> your infographic is an interesting way of presenting statistics. Did you get positive feedback?

This has been a surprise hit. A range of people have said how useful it is in conveying the idea of structural drivers and the pathways between them - something that is quite complex, a challenge to explain simply. All credit to our partners ICRW in Washington, DC who initiated this as a competition through a tech/ comms site using a kind of crowd-sourcing model. To commission something like this can be pretty costly otherwise. Its success does raise provocative questions about economies of scale. A leaflet is much cheaper but does it have the same impact as a short video or infographic?

We also get excellent responses to screenings of our short video on a promising violence/ HIV intervention. It is shown in all kinds of gatherings, from the UN to MSc classes at the London School to civil society groups in Africa:

<http://strive.lshtm.ac.uk/resources/sasa-video-prevent-violence-against-women-now> or the shorter version <http://strive.lshtm.ac.uk/resources/sasa-introduction>



Some researchers fear that packaging or simplifying research amounts to a ‘dumbing down’? Have you found that in your experience? Do you agree with this?

This is a core tension. Within STRIVE, we have the advantage of a good level of trust and a spirit of collaboration so the conversation is going pretty well. Our perspective is that doing public health research, funded

by public money, carries an obligation to ensure that the process and results are useful.

How would you describe your relationship with researchers?

Within STRIVE it's pretty positive. I think the team who designed the consortium made strategic choices - they hired me, for instance, a professional in my 50s, and made my role central, as well as allocating significant resources and emphasis to the research uptake thread within our overall mission. So I start from a pretty strong foundation. The focus of our funder, DFID/ UKaid, also sends the message that research uptake is important. I see it as my challenge to build on this “head start” and, with my team, demonstrate that our work can really deepen the reach and impact of the research.

Could you give us some examples of success where your intermediary role has contributed significantly to research uptake.

Our research uptake model comprises a set of questions rather than answers, for each study or project. Early on, we do a context mapping exercise (landscape analysis) to understand what's going on in terms of funding, policies, research, programmes, civil society action etc relevant to the project. In Tanzania, our KiA member Dr Nyasule Neke met with 30+ stakehold-

ers, including government ministries, in two areas: alcohol policy and programming on adolescents. The result of just this first step has been to position her organisation as a go-to source of information and advice, and she and her colleagues have been invited to participate on technical and policy-making bodies. This is part of preparing the soil so the seeds of knowledge can flourish later on.

One short research study by STRIVE partner ICRW-ARO and UNDP, STRIVE

supported the production of dissemination and uptake materials and some engagement along the way, with positive results (although it must be said that the dissemination meeting would have happened anyway):

<http://strive.lshtm.ac.uk/news/strive-partners-meet-key-policymakers-stigma-guidelines>

<http://strive.lshtm.ac.uk/news/new-case-studies-reducing-hiv-stigma>

<http://strive.lshtm.ac.uk/resources/global-hiv-stigma-reduction-framework-implemented-india>

It's early days yet, so I'm hesitant to claim any big contribution but I feel we've made a good start on this journey. A sign of success for me has been that one of our partners, KHPT, now ensures that every study they work on (not just STRIVE ones) involves a Theory of Change process and a thorough research uptake strategy designed by the full project team - rather than a token add-on left to one person on the fringes.

SPOTLIGHT ON:

Zimbabwe Evidence Informed Policy Network (ZeipNet)



The Zimbabwe Evidence Informed Policy Network (ZeipNet) seeks to bridge the Research-Policy Divide. Its mandate is to promote evidence informed policy making in Zimbabwe through various interventions.

ZeipNet has been established to coordinate over-arching national processes for evidence informed policy making in Zimbabwe through capacity building and active engagement of all stakeholders in the policy making matrix.

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ZeipNet seeks to build the research appetite of policy makers so that they demand research in their policy making and similarly builds the capacity of researchers and research intermediaries to effectively provide quality research to policy makers. It also builds coalitions around policy makers and influencers, the media, government and civic societies that aim at supporting national

processes for evidence informed policy-making.

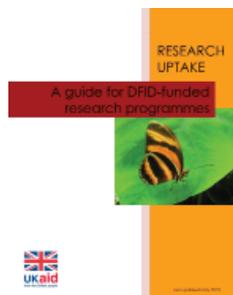
ZeipNet also provides collaborative platforms to share best practices and to disseminate research to effect positive policy change. Through its various programmes, ZeipNet seeks to ultimately institutionalise the evidence-informed policy-making culture in Zimbabwe.

ZeipNet works within the confines of a realistic strategic plan that aims at consolidating and strengthening its position and image as a self-sustaining network. This strategy is created on a premise for it to become a meaningful, innovative and efficient network in as far as promoting evidence informed policy making is concerned.

Join ZeipNet on Facebook and expand their network here <https://www.facebook.com/ZeipNet>

SELECTED TOOLKITS AND GUIDELINES: Research uptake: A guide

http://strive.lshtm.ac.uk/system/files/attachments/dfid_guide_research_uptake.pdf



These guidelines are designed for research programmes to maximise the impact and uptake of their findings in policy and practice. The guide has been compiled by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) in consultation with its Research Programme Consortia. It is published for programmes funded by DFID but is relevant to projects and programmes funded by other organizations as well. It offers conceptual and practical insights into four central strands of research uptake, including: stakeholder engagement, capacity building, communicating and monitoring and evaluation. It also provides resources such as a research uptake ticklist and links to further guidance and research on the impact of uptake strategies.

Maximising the impacts of your research: A handbook for social scientists

http://www.lse.ac.uk/government/research/resgroups/LSEPublicPolicy/Docs/LSE_Impact_Handbook_April_2011.pdf



Handbook from the London School of Economics and Political Science which draws from a 'Research Impacts' project aimed at developing precise methods for measuring and evaluating the impact of research in the public sphere. It supports researchers aiming for a more professional and focused approach to their research from the outset. It provides a large menu of sound and evidence-based advice and guidance on how to ensure that research achieves its maximum visibility and influence with both academic and external audiences. As with any menu, readers need to pick and choose the elements that are relevant for them. Provides detailed information on what constitutes good practice in expanding the impact of social science research and also surveys a wide range of new developments, new tools and new techniques that can help make sense of a rapidly changing field.

A Guide for African Science Media Officers

<http://www.cominit.com/science-media/content/guide-african-science-media-officers>



This guide provides practical advice to help media officers working in African institutions improve the communication of scientific research to the public, policy-makers and funders. It outlines the role of a media officer and offers tips on how to promote research responsibly, for example, by ensuring that claims made in a press release are supported by peer-reviewed research. It also outlines how to source newsworthy stories, how to write a press release and how to pitch stories to print, radio and television journalists. The guide offers practical advice on how to identify opportunities such as conferences to promote research, use new platforms including social media, and provide a local angle on published research.

ESRC Top Ten Tips on Research Communication

- Check external perceptions of your centre/programme among potential target audiences before you start. This will help you develop a communications strategy that gives you a distinct and credible voice.
- Begin with a statement of your objectives in communicating the project; don't simply restate the objectives of the project itself. Make them clear, simple and measurable.
- Be clear on the principles underpinning your strategy. Some may be self-evident, like producing honest, succinct, credible and cost-effective communications. But also think about what you are prepared to do, and not do, as part of your communication strategy.

- Develop some simple messages and model how these might work in different contexts – a press release, a report, a newspaper article, a website page. Remember that you can be succinct without ‘dumbing down’. Make sure your project is branded in line with your communication objectives.
- Be clear about your target audiences and user groups, and prioritise them according to importance and influence relative to your objectives. Don’t just think about the ‘usual suspects’.
- Think about both the actual and preferred channels your target audiences might use and challenge yourself about whether you are planning to use the right ones for maximum impact.
- Include a full list of all the relevant communications activities, developed into a working project plan with deadlines and responsibilities. Keep it flexible but avoid being vague.
- Keep it manageable and don’t underestimate the time involved in communication. Include key deadlines, milestones and review points.
- Estimate the time and money involved. The ESRC recommends that around five per cent of the total funded research budget should be allocated for communication. Ensure value for money by targeting communication effectively: prioritising the audiences and channels and focusing on high impact/low cost activity. Buy in specialist help where necessary.
- Build in some simple evaluation measures at the start so that you’ll know if and how you have succeeded in meeting your communication objectives.

Resources

Events

The 13th International PCST (Public Communication of Science and Technology) Conference 5-8 May 2014, Salvador, Brazil

www.pcst-2014.org

Proposals are invited for presentations on science communication and science-in-society research, science journalism, science museums, and public engagement with science and technology. The deadline for proposals is **23:59 (GMT) on 1st September 2013**. Submitted proposals will be reviewed by members of the PCST Scientific Committee.

Proposals for PCST 2014 are especially welcome on the conference’s main theme, science communication for social inclusion and political engagement and on the following dimensions of science communication: Science communication empowering scientists and the public, Communicating science with policy-makers, Beliefs, values and scientific citizenship, Local community knowledge and global context, New technologies and new practices in science communication, and, emerging issues of science and society.

Annual Meeting of African Science Academies

<http://www.nasaonline.org/index.php/news-and-events/events-calendar/icalrepeat.detail/2013/11/10/4/-/annual-meeting-of-african-science-academies>

10-14 November 2013 – Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

The event is comprised of an ASADI Board Meeting, Annual Meeting of African Science Academies and a conference entitled Biotechnology for Africa’s Development. Details on progress made will be communicated to stakeholders, including sister academies and the ASADI Administration in due course.

Training and development

Short courses and post-graduate degrees in research uptake and utilisation: CREST/DRUSSA

<http://sun025.sun.ac.za/portal/page/portal/Arts/CREST>

The Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science and Technology (CREST) at Stellenbosch University in South Africa will over the next five years offer a number of short courses on Research Uptake and Utilisation. The short courses will be offered in three regions: Southern Africa (Stellenbosch), Eastern Africa (Nairobi) and Western Africa (Accra). The first two short courses offered under this programme are Science Utilisation and Impact and Science Communication. During the latter half of 2013 two more courses will be introduced, namely Research Evaluation (CPD03) and Introduction to Bibliometrics (CPD04).

In addition to this, DRUSSA (Development Research Uptake in Sub-Saharan Africa) programme and the Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science and Technology (CREST) at the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa now offers a postgraduate programme in Research Uptake and Utilisation. Students outside South Africa need to apply by no later than 31 August for next year’s intake. South African students have until 30 September to apply.

Online Course in Science Journalism

<http://www.wfsj.org/course/en/>

This course was created by the World Federation of Science Journalists and the Science and Development Network (SciDev.Net) and

covers practical and conceptual issues in science journalism, such as how to find and research stories, expose false claims, and pitch an idea to an editor. The course is aimed at journalists, students and teachers and the topics are relevant to beginners as well as experienced reporters and editors. It includes 10 lessons, each offering e-lectures, self-teaching questions and assignments.

Science on the Internet Tutorial

<http://etutorials.inasp.info/scienceontheinternet/>

Science on the Internet is a free tutorial designed to help parliamentary staff and other policy-makers to develop internet research skills. The tutorial was developed by the International Network for the Availability for Science Publications (INASP) and the Institute for Learning and Research Technology (ILRT) at the University of Bristol. It is based on the Internet Detective tutorial and looks at the critical thinking required when using the internet for research and offers practical advice on evaluating the quality of websites. The entire tutorial should take 1-2 hours to complete and can be done in stages.

Networks and news services

Africa Science Technology & Innovation News

<http://www.africasti.com/>

Africa Science Technology & Innovation News (AfricaSTI.com) is a platform for the dissemination of news, features, editorials and significant developments in science, health, agriculture and climate change on, and about, Africa. Operated by a collection of African science journalists, the project is a news medium that aims to give a voice to scientists on the continent and in the Diaspora. The AfricaSTI team comprises journalists practicing in over 20 African countries who have been exposed to global best practices in ethics, methodology and style of science reporting.

International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP)

<http://www.inasp.info/>

INASP is an international development organisation working with a global network of partners to improve access, production and use of research information and knowledge, so that countries are equipped to solve their development challenges. INASP works with 23 partner countries and over 80 network countries and advises and advocates for improved policy and practice in achieving sustainable and equitable development through effective communication, knowledge and networks.

SciDev.Net – the Science and Development Network

<http://www.scidev.net/global/>

The SciDev.Net website is a leading source of views and analysis on information about science and technology for global development. SciDev.Net engages primarily with development professionals, policymakers, researchers, the media and the informed public with the aim of helping individuals and organisations apply evidence and insights from science and technology to decision-making in order to have a positive impact on equitable and sustainable development and poverty reduction.

Soul Beat Africa: Science and Media

<http://www.comminit.com/science-media/>

Soul Beat Africa is a knowledge management initiative focusing on communication and media for social change in Africa. It offers an online space for people and organisations to access and share information and to engage in discussion and debate. The website is meant for development practitioners, the media and media institutions, academics, researchers, and anyone who is using or is interested in communication for development in Africa and offers a database of summarised knowledge on communication for development in Africa.

Blogs Focusing on Research Uptake

DRUSSA

<http://www.drussa.net/>

Link up with blogs on various topics on the Development Research Uptake in Sub-Saharan Africa (DRUSSA) digital platform and engage with all segments of its audiences, principally located in Sub-Saharan Africa, but also internationally.

London School of Economics (LSE): Impact of the social sciences

<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/>

The Impact of Social Sciences blog is run by the LSE Public Policy Group, and is a hub for researchers, administrative staff, students, think-tanks, government, and anyone else interested in maximising the impact of academic work in the social sciences and other disciplines. It aims to encourage debate, share best practice and keep the impact community up to date with news, events and debate. If you would like to contribute or have ideas for the blog please contact the blog team at impactofsocialsciences@lse.ac.uk or tweet the blog @lseimpactblog

Associations and journals

The African Federation of Science Journalists (AFSJ)

<http://www.wfsj.org/associations/page.php?id=77>

The African Federation of Science Journalists (AFSJ) is a pan-African network of journalists who cover science and allied disciplines such as technology, innovation, agriculture, health and climate change from a research and development perspective. The network's primary mandate is to improve the quality of science journalism in Africa by embarking on capacity building activities, mainstreaming African science journalists within the global context and creating interactive platforms between African science journalists and scientists.

The South African Science Journalists' Association

<http://sasja.org/>

SASJA, the Professional Association of Science Media Practitioners in South Africa is a non-profit, non-governmental, national organisation mainly representing the interests of science and technology (including health, environmental, engineering, sports) journalists and other science media practitioners. In the interests of building a strong tradition in sound science reporting, SASJA facilitates and encourages training, networking and education for science journalists in South Africa, the SADC countries and the rest of Africa.

Journal of Science Communication

<http://jcom.sissa.it/archive/12/02>

JCOM is an open access journal on science communication which aims to provide some theoretical guidelines both for scholars and practitioners in the field of public communication of science and technology. JCOM has been published online quarterly since 2002. Texts are published in both English and the author's primary language, and each research article undergoes a multidisciplinary peer-review by experts belonging to different areas of competence.



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