

# **Communications Strategy for the Climate Change and Social Learning (CCSL) initiative**

## **Introduction**

This is a Communications Strategy for the Climate Change and Social Learning (CCSL) initiative. It outlines the initiative's objectives, goals and key communication messages while providing an overview of key audience groups and its theory of change. It should be seen as the guiding document for the Climate Change and Social Learning (CCSL) Communications Plan.

The strategy is in line with the overall communications and engagement strategy outlined by the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS), and includes direct references to the reformation of CGIAR Challenge and Research Programs to results-based management with theories of change and impact pathways in place.

## **The Climate Change and Social Learning initiative**

The main organisations within the initiative are the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS), the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), the Collaborative Adaptation Research Initiative in Africa and Asia (CARIAA), and International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). These organisations are also taking part in, and help shape, the overall communications and engagement work for the initiative.

The CCSL initiative defines social learning as: *“Social learning approaches help facilitate knowledge sharing, joint learning and co-creation experiences between particular stakeholders around a shared purpose taking learning and behaviour change beyond the individual to networks and systems. Through a facilitated iterative process of working together, in interactive dialogue, exchange, learning, action and reflection and on-going partnership new shared ways of knowing emerge that lead to changes in practice.”*

The CCSL initiative sees social learning as a “decision-support” tool for climate change adaptation, resilience building and mitigation work. Social Learning can help create and fast-track behaviour change, while helping to change people's views, understanding, norms. It is a tool to help facilitate sessions and platforms where new knowledge and decisions are co-created.

The initiative offers ways that programs and organisations can think of social learning and how it can be a valuable approach within traditional program activities. In addition, the initiative offers and manages platforms where the latest, most innovative research on social learning and development can easily be found, shared, and discussed.

The Climate Change and Social Learning initiative has made significant progress on the theories and understanding of social learning approaches. A project strategy has been prepared and the initiative is now taking concrete steps towards building an evidence base for the social learning approach.

**The main objectives are to:**

- Ensure that research institutions and projects are clear on how and where the use of social learning methodologies could benefit a project or program, and to help programs deliver on development targets, in this case tackling climate change and food insecurity.
- The second goal is to get organisations, both within and beyond CGIAR, to incorporate this methodology into their working practices and funding arrangements.
- The third goal of the initiative is to share experience and knowledge with those who work in social learning and beyond, develop new partnerships and encourage different working practices with current partners where relevant.

**Communications within the Climate Change and Social Learning initiative**

The Climate Change and Social Learning initiative believes effective, targeted and science-driven communications is needed to achieve its objectives. Therefore the community is dedicated to invest time and effort into communications and engagement activities. Knowledge management within its research project activities is also an important part. The communications activities are aimed to support and help the initiative achieve the set objectives (see above).

Communications within the CCSL initiative has two purposes. On the one hand, communications is integrated within the core definition of social learning. Communicating, sharing knowledge and information, learning and feeding back (learning loops), are what make social learning and what create behaviour change at scale.

On the other hand, targeted and well-thought out communications and knowledge management activities are needed in order to meet the objectives of the initiative: ensure that research institutions and organisations are clear on how and where to use social learning methodologies; making sure social learning is integrated into organisations' working practices and funding, and to share new research and activities to an identified key audience and internally. Achieving the set objectives of the CCSL initiative is also the goal for all communications activities.

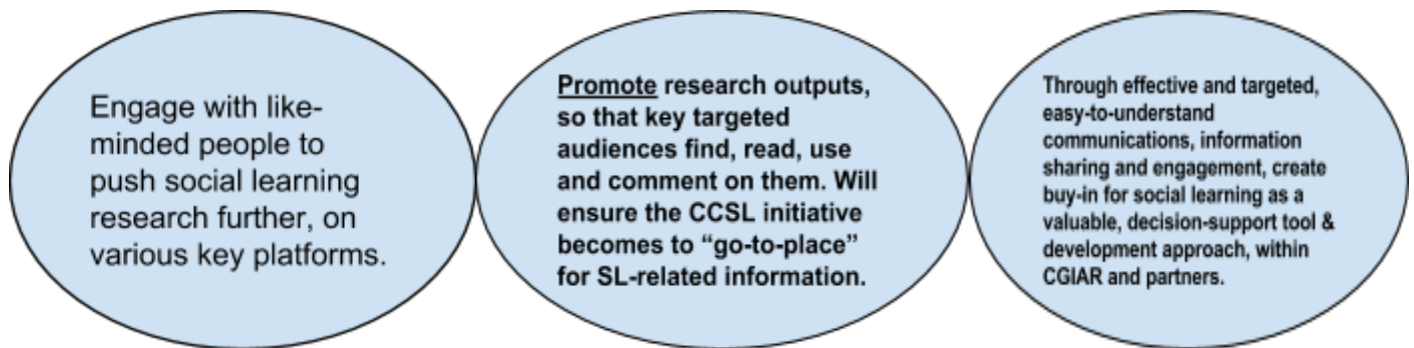
**Theory of change & communications:**

We want to create a 'buzz' around social learning using various social media and communications tools. This will get people to start talking about the CCSL initiative online, further enticing people to search for knowledge about social learning (via blogs, research products or promotional materials), and get engaged in the CCSL sandbox (on CCSL Yammer group and the Wikisite). Dedicated people can in turn make sure they bring back knowledge about social learning approaches to their own institutions and partners, encouraging them to integrate social learning within their programs. This will help the initiative achieve the set objectives. This requires us to make social learning appealing, ensure that others understand the concept and provide monitoring and evaluation indicators, all of which need to be communicated externally.

### Outline of communications activities:

Activities range from actively engaging with key audiences through discussions (both online and face-to-face), promotion of new outputs and activities, information sharing and knowledge management. Activities seek to achieve the main objectives of the initiative. The main activities are therefore:

- Engage with like-minded people, who have an interest in the theory and practice of social learning for large-scale change. Engagement includes: discuss, receive input and feedback from, share knowledge and thoughts and ideas. Engagement within the various platforms goes beyond the internal community of practice, and seeks to be inclusive and participatory [Engagement]
- Share and spread information about the initiative, progress and outputs and how social learning can be used to promote behaviour change related to climate adaptation and mitigation [Promotion and Information Sharing]
- Through effective communications and engagement, create buy-in within CGIAR, CCAFS, and partners that social learning can support development projects and programs deliver better results, which is done by creating and establishing a dialogue around social learning [Promotion, Information Sharing & Engagement]
- Maintain and strengthen the knowledge management and structure of the various outputs on dedicated sites and platforms [Knowledge management]



*Above: Key communications activities for the CCSL initiative*

### Communications platforms: short introduction

For research publications the initiative uses CGIAR CGSPACE. The CCSL dedicated Wikispace is used to collect all materials, notes, event updates, resources and more. The initiative has a dedicated page on CCAFS web site, and both IIED’s and CCAFS blogs are open for blog submissions. Yammer is used to uphold knowledge sharing and engagement in the immediate initiative. *For extensive list of used platforms, review the CCSL Communications Plan.*

### **Key communications messages**

Key communications messages that should be included in all CCSL communications materials, blogs, presentations, videos, articles and more. The messages will evolve as the CCSL initiative grows, and develops.

- 1) Social Learning is a decision support tool, that can help improve and strengthen the support for a new policy, or create change in a set behaviour
- 2) Social Learning goes beyond the individual, targeting systems and networks at scale. The idea is to create impact in communities rather than within one person.
- 3) Co-creation of knowledge is key, as groups come together and share experiences under facilitation and through iterative learning, multiple loops of new knowledge and information can be created and adopted by people.
- 4) By focusing on mid-term and long-term change, and opening up for learning loops and progressive improvement of projects, decisions and tools, social learning aims to create transformative change (fundamental social change in a society), and not just new learning for the moment.

### **Key target audience groups**

- **Core partners:** Organisations directly managing and implementing the work of the initiative (IIED, CCAFS, ILRI, CARIAA). All CGIAR centers and research programs and CGIAR itself.
- **Policy makers and opinion leaders at international, regional and national levels:** Includes policy makers in national (and sub-national) governments, regional initiatives and international institutions, climate change negotiators, governors of adaptation and mitigation funds, and opinion leaders in the spheres of food security, agriculture and climate change.
- **National agencies responsible for implementation of strategies for climate change, agriculture and food security:** Technical agencies responsible implementing policy, such as meteorology departments, agricultural extension services, marketing boards, crisis response centers, and environmental protection agencies.
- **Farmers' organizations and rural communities of practice:** To benefit and engage with farmers will depend crucially on links with intermediaries, including administrative offices of farmers' organizations, NGOs at different levels concerned with rural development, and networks designed to share emerging practice at the grassroots level.
- **Civil society organizations at international, regional and national levels:** NGOs and coalitions involved in implementation and advocacy in the spheres of agriculture, climate, food security and development. Includes partners such as PANOS, CARE, OXFAM others
- **Research community:** Researchers within and beyond the CCAFS community including CGIAR and Future Earth networks and other research networks, universities, national agricultural research institutions, and international scientific processes such as the IPCC. PhD and Master students also important key audience.
- **Donors:** Agencies that provide financial leadership for social learning approaches, now or in the future.
- **Media and online "media" such as web sites and platforms, blogs and bloggers, and other "bearers of news":** Can be considered as information bearers to their communities.