

Communicating your research to policy makers

Session outline

- SciDev.Net and effective communication
- Panel discussion
- Q&A

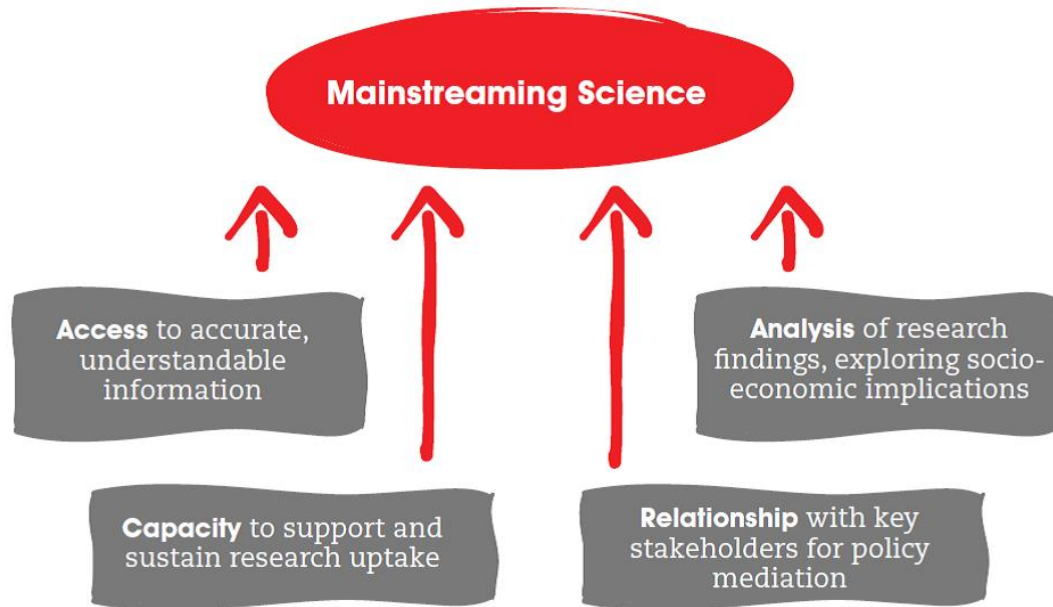
What is SciDev.Net?

- SciDev.Net's website is the world's leading source of reliable and authoritative news, views and analysis on information about science and technology for global development.
- We engage primarily with development professionals, policymakers, researchers, the media and the informed public.

SciDev.Net and policy making



Visualising our contributions



Contribution as a media outlet...

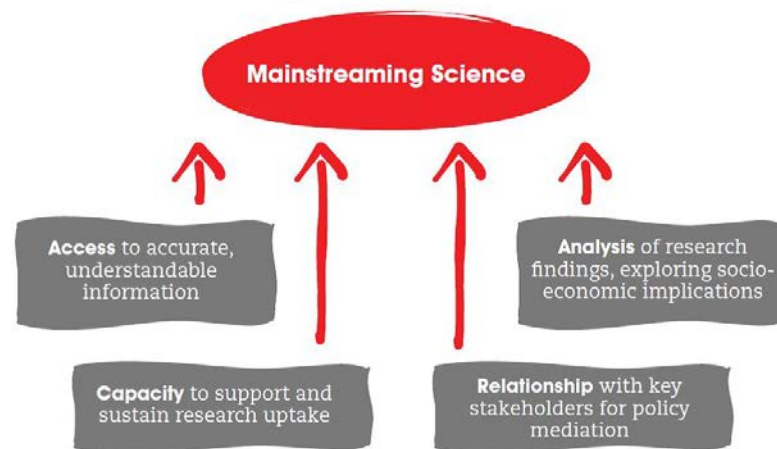


Having a profile in the media has an impact on public discourse which in turn contributes to policy.

For example, a 2012 study by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) with 700 policy stakeholders in six countries (Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Kenya and Nepal) indicated that, over a three-month period, policymakers cited their most common source of information as “details from news items” .

Some other key contributions

- Capacity building
 - Workshops
 - Practical guides
- Networking events



What do we mean by policy?



- “a course or principle of action adopted or proposed by a government, party, business, or individual” **Dictionary**
- A policy is a statement of intent, and is implemented as a procedure or protocol.” - **Wikipedia**

Examples of 'policy makers'

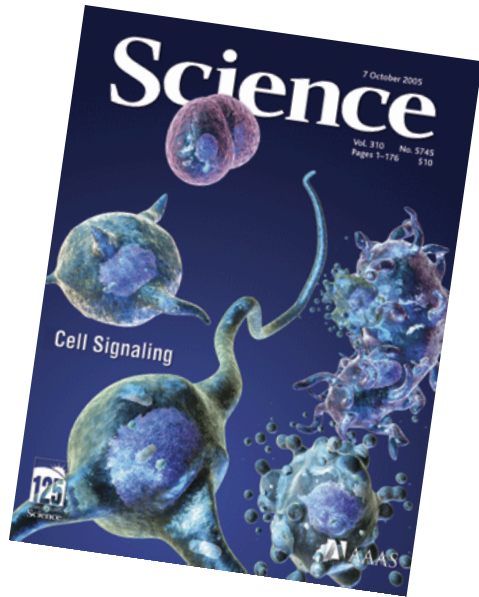


Anyone with the authority to decide how to handle matters in a particular sector is involved in policy making and therefore is a policy maker

Government: Legislators, politicians, permanent secretaries, senior management in ministries

Higher education: Heads of institutions, vice chancellors

Researchers not your only audience



Decision makers on relevance of your research to society

People who determine research budgets

People who influence research priorities – Not all of them might be researchers!

Ask yourself...

- Do you think your research is relevant to your country or region? – Health, environment, education, economy...
- Are you worried that your research area is not seen as a high priority?
- Do you think that there should be more national or institutional funding for your research?

Writing... but relevant to all communication

“You are not writing to impress the scientist you have just interviewed, nor the professor who got you through your degree, nor the editor who foolishly turned you down, or the rather dishy person you just met at a party and told you were a writer. Or even your mother. You are writing to impress someone hanging from a strap in the tube between Parson's Green and Putney, who will stop reading in a fifth of a second, given a chance.”



Tim Radford, The Guardian

Adapted from Practical Guide by Chandrika Nath from Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST)

5 PIECES OF ADVICE FOR ENGAGING COMMUNICATION

The 'breakfast test'

Could a politician identify the main points of your briefing paper in the time it takes to eat a hasty breakfast?



Brevity and clarity

- Self-contained – *no need to refer to anything else*
- Clear, obvious structure e.g. who, what, when, where, why...
- If it's complex, stick to one strand



Learn from what works in the news: tell an engaging narrative



Conflict



Personalisation



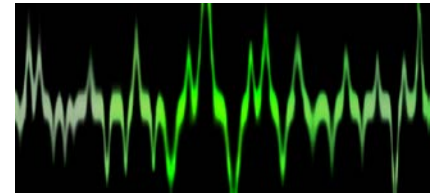
Meaningfulness



Unexpectedness



Unambiguity



Frequency

Have style

- Short sentences
- Have a narrative... perhaps a big idea.
- Avoid jargon and acronyms
- Define measurements and scales with something relatable e.g. “about one hundredth the width of a human hair” rather than a micron

Smart distribution

Target people who you think should be interested and tell them why in an engaging way...

e.g. when the UK Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) published a briefing paper on flooding in 2001, it sent a copy to all members of the British Parliament accompanied by a map of their constituencies... it captured their attention!

PANEL DISCUSSION

Q&A