

# **Belling 'Policy Cats': How Can Communication Help?**

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**PEER Science Participants' Conference**

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# Asking a few Questions...

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- ❑ What DO policy makers want?
- ❑ What role for 'knowledge brokers' in S&T outreach?
- ❑ How to get heard – and noted - amidst the Global Cacophony?
- ❑ How to know if/when we have influenced debate/policy?
- ❑ Why do some kites fly better?
- ❑ Examples



Bilicki



**Cartoon by Justin Bilicki**

<http://www.justinbilicki.com/#Political-Cartoons>

COULD YOU KINDLY  
REPHRASE THAT IN  
EQUIVOCAL, INACCURATE,  
VAGUE, SELF-SERVING AND  
ROUNDAABOUT TERMS THAT  
WE CAN ALL UNDERSTAND?



# The Bigger Picture...

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- Research is but one voice in the knowledge 'ecology' relating to policy & practice
- Research isn't something 'we' do and then communicate to 'them'
- Search for answers & solutions has become more participatory & nuanced...

Improving the impact of development research through better research communications and uptake

AusAID, DFID & UKCDS funded global workshop in London, Nov 29 – 30, 2010

Full Report:

<http://tiny.cc/R4DCom>

# The Bigger Picture...

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- Need to improve the SUPPLY of robust research...to guide both policy & practice
- Value of NEUTRALITY of evidence amidst so many lobby & advocacy groups

Improving the impact of development research through better research communications and uptake

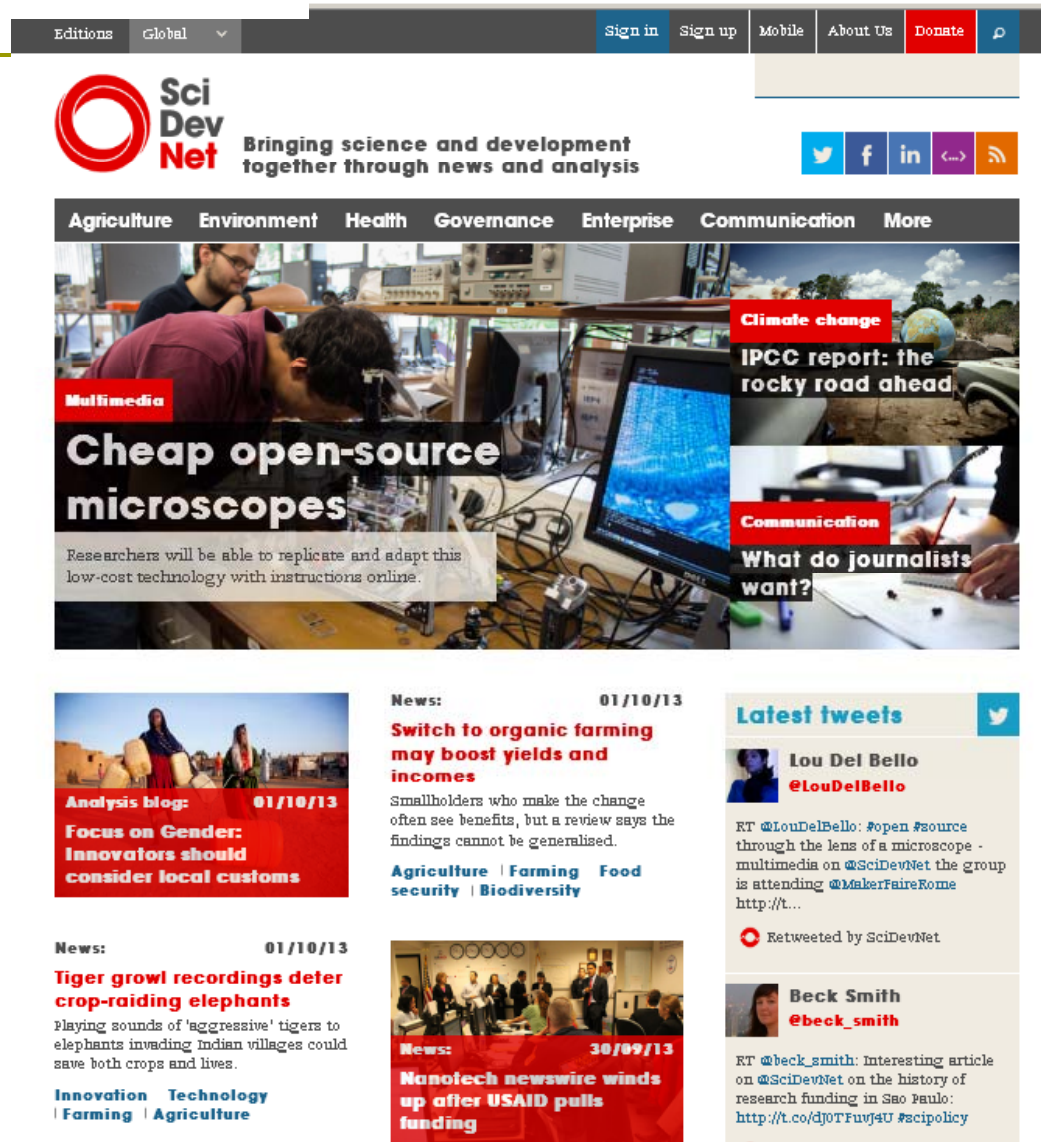
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Full Report:

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- ❑ Free access website journalistically covering science & technology for global development
- ❑ News, views & analysis
- ❑ Focus on developing countries & regions
- ❑ Backed by *Nature*, *Science* & TWAS + aid agencies & foundations
- ❑ [www.scidev.net](http://www.scidev.net)



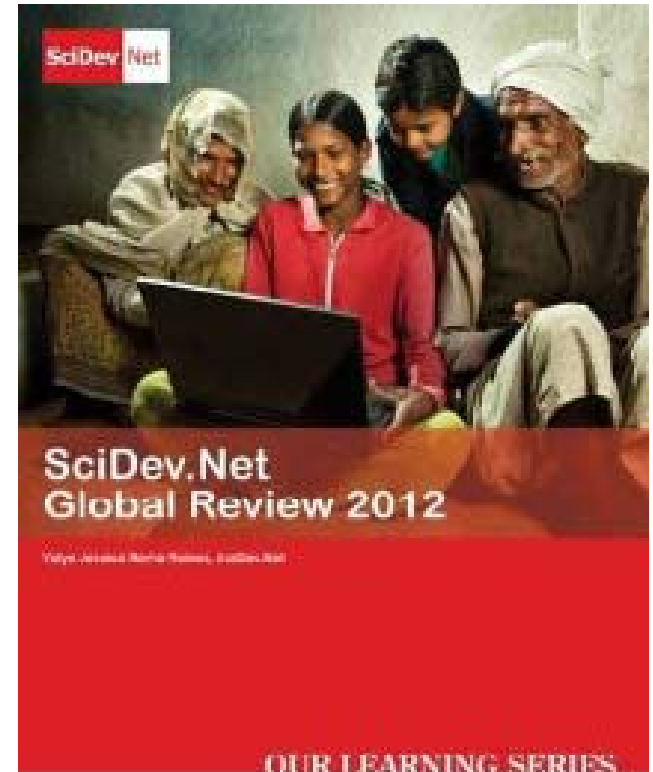
The screenshot shows the SciDevNet website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'Editions' set to 'Global', and links for 'Sign in', 'Sign up', 'Mobile', 'About Us', and 'Donate'. Below the navigation bar is the SciDevNet logo and tagline: 'Bringing science and development together through news and analysis'. A secondary navigation bar lists categories: 'Agriculture', 'Environment', 'Health', 'Governance', 'Enterprise', 'Communication', and 'More'. The main content area features several featured articles and multimedia pieces:

- Multimedia:** 'Cheap open-source microscopes' - Researchers will be able to replicate and adapt this low-cost technology with instructions online.
- Climate change:** 'IPCC report: the rocky road ahead'.
- Communication:** 'What do journalists want?'.
- Analysis blog:** 'Focus on Gender: Innovators should consider local customs' (01/10/13).
- News:** 'Switch to organic farming may boost yields and incomes' (01/10/13). Smallholders who make the change often see benefits, but a review says the findings cannot be generalised.
- News:** 'Tiger growl recordings deter crop-raiding elephants' (01/10/13). Playing sounds of 'aggressive' tigers to elephants invading Indian villages could save both crops and lives.
- News:** 'Nanotech newswire winds up after USAID pulls funding' (30/09/13).

On the right side, there is a 'Latest tweets' section showing tweets from Lou Del Bello and Beck Smith, including retweets and links to related content.

# What DO policy makers want?

- ❑ To understand how to mainstream science evidence & tech innovation for development
- ❑ Global survey by SciDev.Net, LSE & partners: 3,000 responses + 600 interviews + focus groups in SEAsia
- ❑ Probing how ‘knowledge brokers’ in S&T operate in different developing regions
- ❑ Many insights from policy makers & policy influencers on how they seek, find & use evidence 4 policy



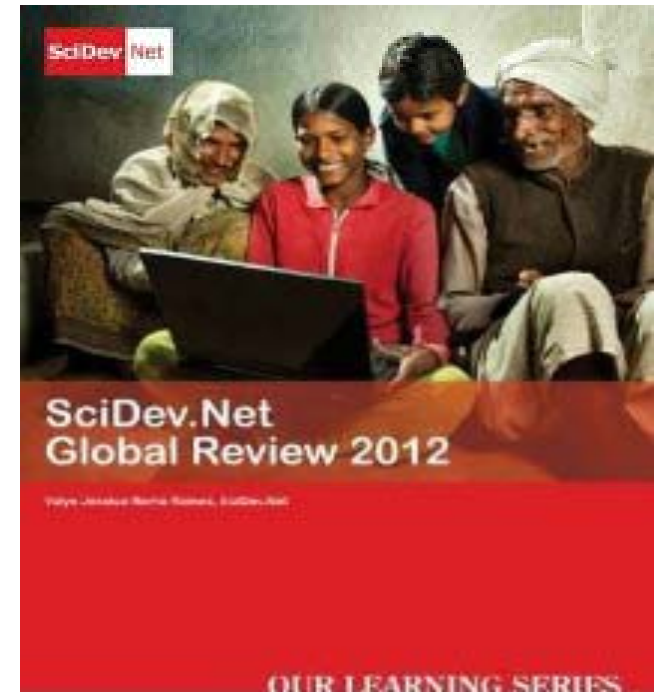
**Full Report:**  
[tiny.cc/SDNGR12](http://tiny.cc/SDNGR12)



## Among key findings...

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- 70% respondents use evidence for ‘personal knowledge building, keeping up to date with certain topics’, than only for delivering specific activities
- Harder to discern impact!

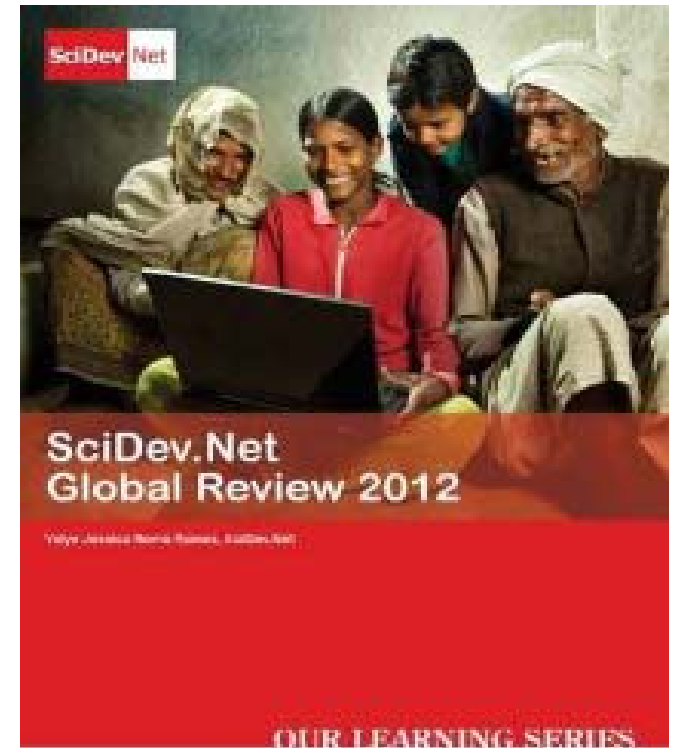


**Report:**  
[tiny.cc/SDNGR12](http://tiny.cc/SDNGR12)

# Among key findings...

## Challenges of policy-makers:

- Lack of human or financial resources to act
- Lack of economic implications of research findings
- Lack of sources that offer S&T info in readily usable manner for public engagement
- Perception that public lacks interest in S&T



**Report:**  
[tiny.cc/SDNGR12](http://tiny.cc/SDNGR12)



**“My policy-maker doesn’t understand me!”**

# Making Your Voice Heard: Engaging Policy Makers (+Public)

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## □ Direct outreach

- Producing newsletters
- Writing to newspapers or news magazines
- Own websites (free public access)
- Social media: Own/group blog, Twitter, etc.

## □ Collaborative outreach:

- Work with journalists, filmmakers, TV producers
- Sharing with mass media rights-free material (with remixing allowed)
- Allowing privileged access to science journalists

# TVE Asia Pacific (TVEAP): A 'knowledge intermediary'

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- Asian regional non-profit media foundation, est. 1996
- Using broadcast TV, video & web to communicate development
- **Journalistic story-tellers: work with researchers, educators & civil society**
- Helping them engage audiences (peers, policy makers, wider public)
- Anchored in Sri Lanka, covering developing countries in Asia Pacific



## **Communication**

Many methods, processes, strategies,  
channels & technologies

### **Mass Media**

Print: text-based  
Radio: audio-based  
TV/Video: audio-visual  
New media  
Convergent media



# Media-based communication...

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- ❑ **Necessary but not sufficient**
- ❑ This alone may not lead to policy or social change
- ❑ BUT...it's very useful to:
  - Trigger discussion/debates
  - Create 'ripples'
  - Inspire chain reactions
- ❑ **Not an end by itself...**
- ❑ **...but a useful beginning**





Photo by Louie Psihoyos, [www.psihoyos.com](http://www.psihoyos.com)

# Information Society marches on...

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# TVE Asia Pacific approach: Make them well & set them free!

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- ❑ Co-produce authentic & accessible science & development content
- ❑ Short & slick preferred
- ❑ **Based on science -- but *not too immersed in it!***
- ❑ Let them free: no copyright restrictions at all!
- ❑ Peddle them on multiple platforms & outlets





# Example 1: Research leader distils findings & links them to policy

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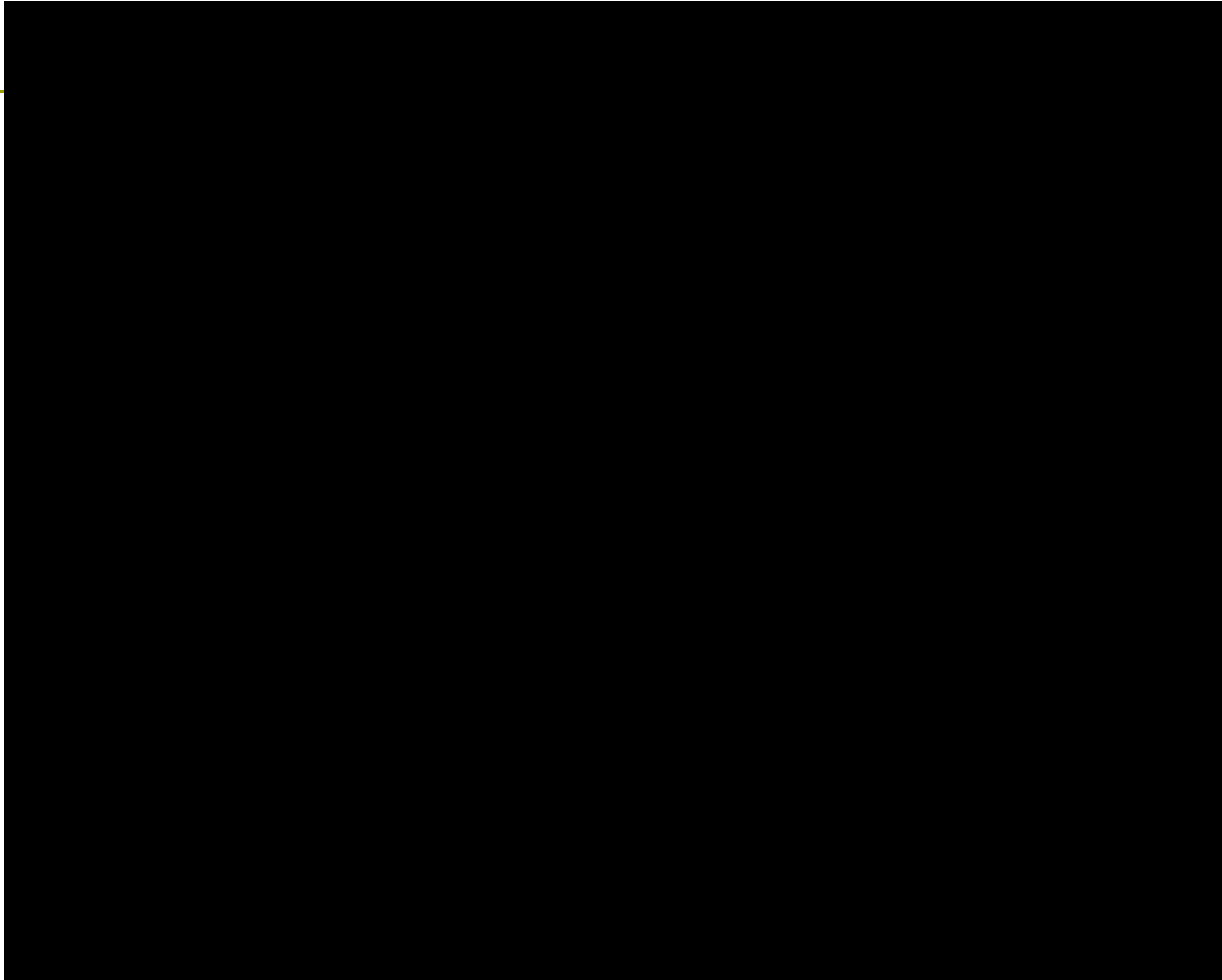
# Colin's StraightTalk

- Dr Colin Chartres, former DG, International Water Management Institute (IWMI), CGIAR network
- Web videos on policy implications of IWMI's research in Asia & Africa
- Colin's StraightTalks: all 5-7 mins each
- [www.youtube.com/user/iwmimedia](http://www.youtube.com/user/iwmimedia)





# Colin's StraightTalk #5 (Aug 2010):



# Colin's StraightTalk: Our learning from 2009-11

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- ❑ Scripted yet presented in an informal style
- ❑ Field-based talks visually more appealing
- ❑ Accepting uncertainty is fine: limits of knowledge
- ❑ Some topics gain more traction than others online: how to predict?
- ❑ Practice makes it better!



## Example 2: Evidence-based advocacy in ICT policy & regulation

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- LIRNEasia: regional think tank studying ICT policy & regulation in emerging Asian economies
- Looking at (among others):
  - Telephone use at bottom of (income) pyramid [BOP]
  - Broadband quality of service: telcos promises vs. users' reality



**Dr Rohan Samarajiva,  
Chair & Founder CEO**

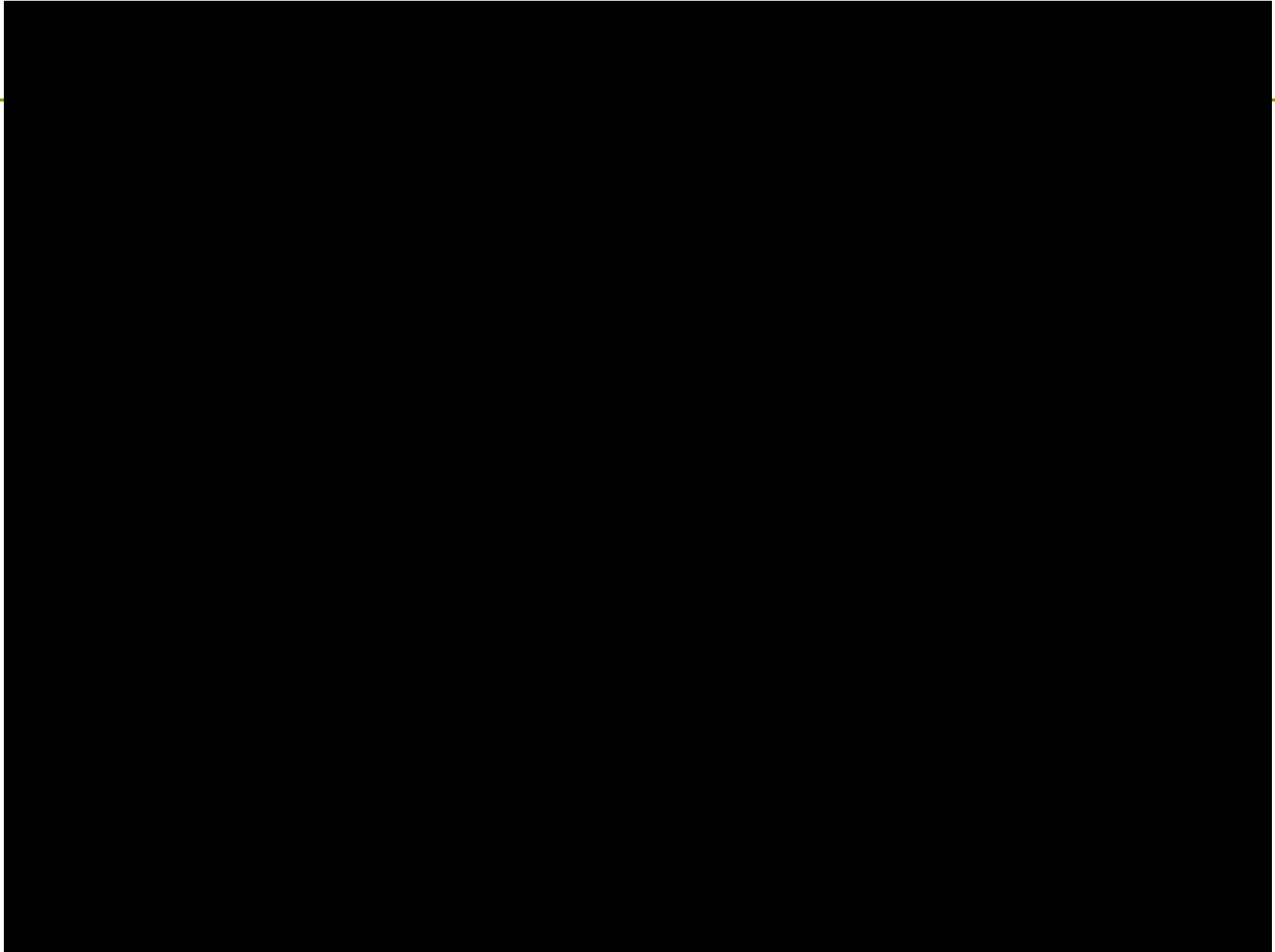


# Fraudband or Broadband?

- Summing up essence of 2 yr research project to monitor & evaluate quality of service of broadband services in selected Asian economies
- Research leader looks at communications experience



# Fraudband or Broadband? (2011)



# Asia's Telephone Revolution @Bottom of the Pyramid



Multi-country (South & Southeast Asia), Multi-year  
Large sample surveys: Quantitative + qualitative  
By LIRNEasia & partners

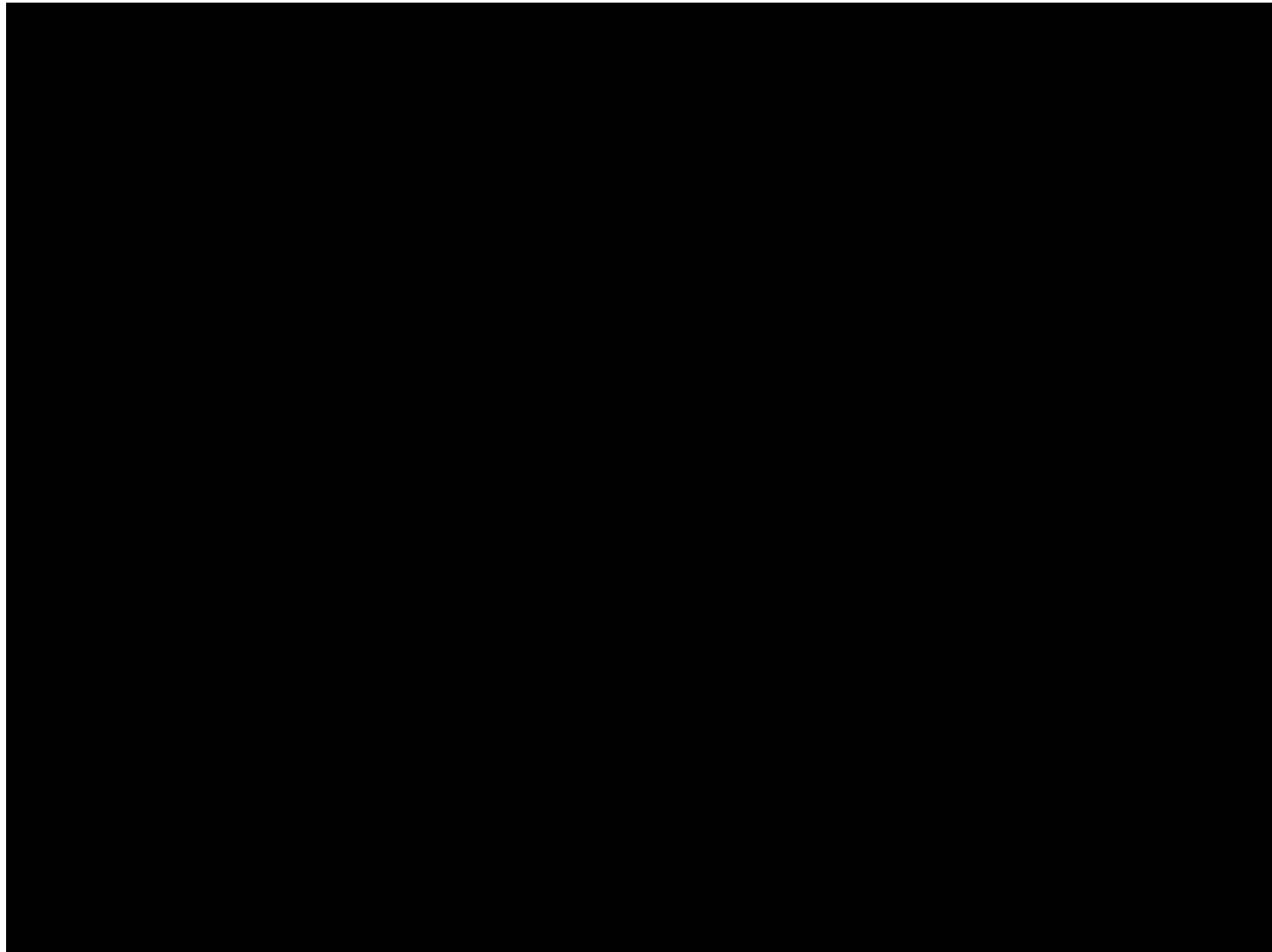
<http://lirneasia.net>



# Teleuse@BOP: Lourdes Casipit

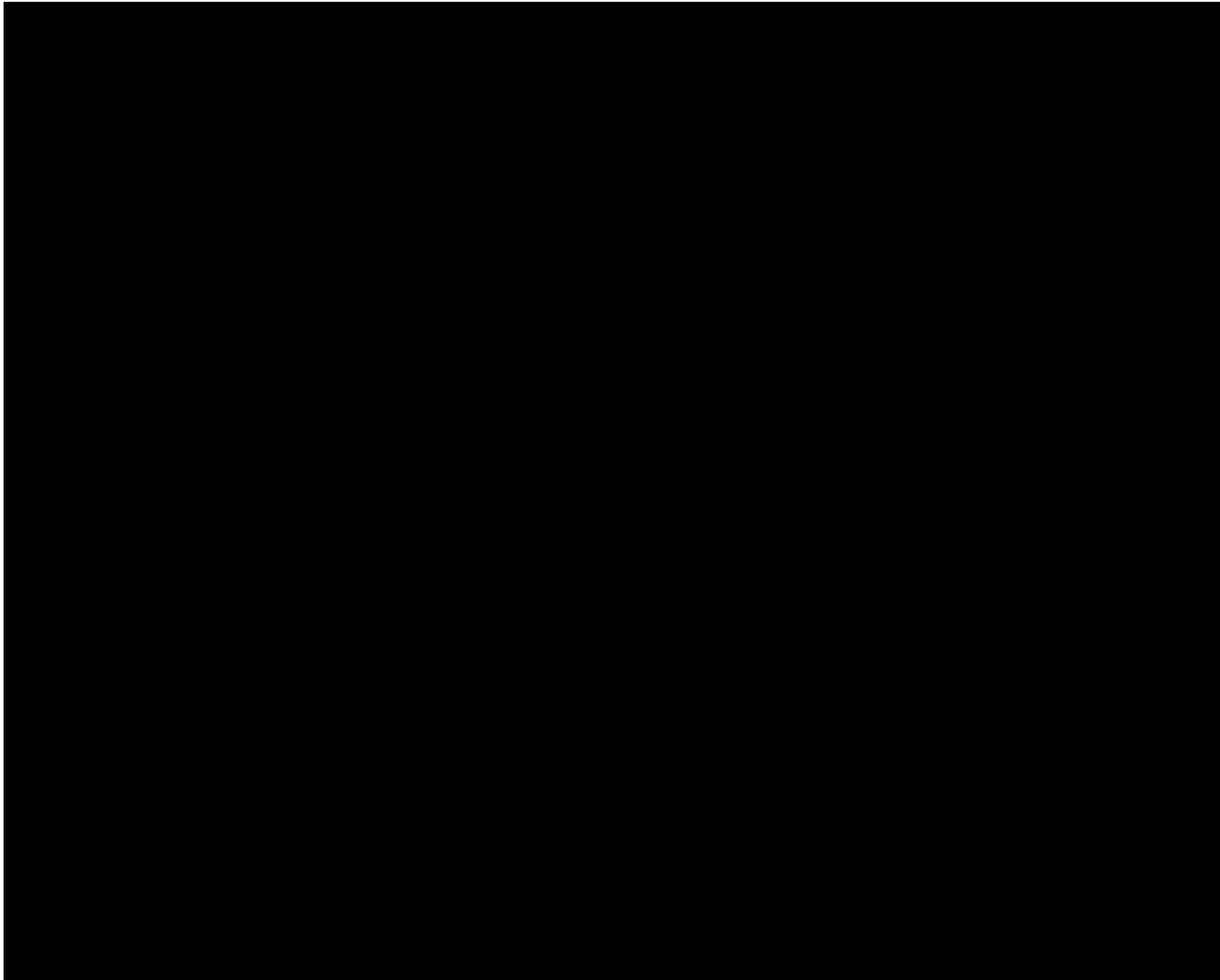
Metro Manila, The Philippines (2008)

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**Teleuse@BOP: Poonam Devi**  
Samasthipur, Bihar, India (2011)

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# LIRNEasia's efforts to change policy

Examples of successful engagements with policymakers & regulators (not all were successful)

## **India**

Changing universal service policy

## **Sri Lanka**

Rolling back regressive tax on mobile charges

## **Indonesia**

Lowering leased-line prices

## **Bangladesh**

Contributing to rules on broadband quality of service

Modifying terms of mobile license renewal

**Courtesy: Dr Rohan Samarajiva, LIRNEasia**

**From presentation at CPRSouth in Mauritius, Sep 2012**

# What can be learned?

- Matching supply and demand for policy research
  - Do the reward systems of the academy mesh with what policymakers & regulators want?
- Policy-relevant research may not be the most valued in academic settings
- Having research ready for when policy windows open
  - Is the academic production cycle conducive to this?
- How can new media be used in both push and pull modes to increase access to research?
- Is the research → policy nexus fundamentally different in developed & developing countries?

**Courtesy: Dr Rohan Samarajiva, LIRNEasia**

**From presentation at CPRSouth in Mauritius, Sep 2012**

# TVE Asia Pacific's own learning: Communicating 4 Policy Change

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- ❑ One size doesn't fit all:  
need to customise!
- ❑ Influencing public/policy minds:  
slow, incremental process
- ❑ Keep turning up, speaking out
- ❑ Under-rated value of PASSION!
- ❑ Debate everyone with courtesy
- ❑ Acknowledge uncertainties &  
gaps in knowledge



# Communicating 4 Policy Change: Learnings – contd.

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- ❑ Mass media proliferation + new media rise → audiences fragmented & distracted
- ❑ Niche outreach possible, but harder to catch lots of eyeballs
- ❑ Like kite-flying: after investing all creativity & effort, it all depends on winds!
- ❑ Web is like a 24/7 kite festival...







Photo courtesy: [photography.nationalgeographic.com](http://photography.nationalgeographic.com)



# My favourite Questions to researchers...

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- ❑ What drives you?
- ❑ What keeps you awake at night?
- ❑ What happens next?



# Thanks!

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**Blog:**

[nalakagunawardene.com](http://nalakagunawardene.com)

**Sunday newspaper column:**

<http://collidecolumn.wordpress.com>

**Twitter:** NalakaG

**Email:** [alien@nalaka.org](mailto:alien@nalaka.org)

**TVE Asia Pacific:** [www.tveap.org](http://www.tveap.org)

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*Images used in good faith*