

CCAFS Climate Change and Social Learning: Phase 2 concept note

The aim of the CCAFS Climate Change and Social Learning (CCSL) Initiative is to better understand and tap the potential of social learning for research on climate change, agriculture and food security.

In June 2013, the CCSL “Plan-and-Writeshop” reviewed the prior 18 months of activities and products. Ideas and a vision for the next phase of work were then set out.

This concept note outlines these ideas and the vision for Phase 2 of the CCSL Initiative in greater depth. First, the definition and utility of CCSL are revisited. Next, the CCSL Strategy set out at the end of Phase 1 is summarised. The vision for Phase 2 as well as the hypotheses behind it are then explained.

Defining CCSL

Climate change can be defined as changes in the statistical properties of the climate system that are apparent over long periods of time, and the impacts of these changes on human, biophysical and social systems.

Social learning can be defined as approaches to problem solving that 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 — through interactive dialogue, exchange, learning, action, reflection and on-going partnership — new shared ways of knowing emerge that lead to changes in practice.

Climate Change for Social Learning (CCSL) is therefore the use of social learning approaches to facilitate adaptation to and mitigation of climate change.

Why CCSL?

Local communities dealing with the daily realities of climate change risk, adaptation and mitigation need ways to combine their own knowledge with that of others to build better solutions. We believe the concept of social learning is a promising way to forge new partnerships and co-create new knowledge to support more collective local decision making and behavior change in responding to climate change.

‘Wicked’ problems are defined as highly complex, with constraints, challenges and resource needs that change over time, further complicated by varying stakeholder perspectives, knowledge and cultural framings. Climate change and climate variability present just such complexity, and their effects on agriculture and our future food security are among the most pressing problems the world faces. Many communities already face the consequences of climate change, ranging from dried

Authors ••

The CCSL Initiative

About Us ••

The CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS) brings together the world’s best researchers in agricultural science, development research, climate science and Earth System science, to identify and address the most important interactions, synergies and tradeoffs between climate change, agriculture and food security. CCAFS is a strategic partnership of CGIAR and Future Earth, led by the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT). www.ccafs.cgiar.org





earth to rising tides, and all need different solutions. In the face of uncertainty these solutions must be flexible and adaptive.

Wicked problems call for wicked solutions. Global and local climate change adaptation, mitigation and risk management will depend on individuals', communities' and agencies' willingness to collectively address issues that cannot be addressed by any one individual or household. "Like nothing else, dealing with climate change calls upon us to engage in effective collective decision making."

Successful adaptation or mitigation outcomes depend on coordinated (personal and collective) actions from decision makers at different levels, including local, national, regional and global. The challenge is less to determine a single solution and more to chart a course navigating many perspectives and to co-create new knowledge, drawing on the many voices and 'knowledges' of different stakeholders.

Social learning is useful to a range of groups, from communities to government to development agents and institutes. By connecting and co-creating knowledge and ideas, social learning can empower rural communities to address complex climate change challenges. Social learning taps into the power of the crowd, helping communities to collectively design and chart solutions from different perspectives.

Social learning approaches also offer pathways by which communities can solicit inputs and support from other actors, e.g. governments and researchers. For development agents, social learning helps to anchor climate and food security interventions in community realities, making them more relevant and sustainable – and more likely to have impacts at scale. The potential to realise such development outcomes and impacts also makes

social learning attractive to research for development institutes. Beyond development, social learning offers the opportunity for research institutes to perform better and deliver on their effectiveness goals.

The CCSL strategy and five action areas

The CCSL strategy adopted by the CCSL initiative instigated by the CCAFS research objective for the CGIAR aims to identify and share new ways of working. It seeks to understand further how social learning methodologies can help in the fight against climate change, and to help build a community of practice to enrich findings and co-create new learning. The strategy has the following objectives:

- To demonstrate and document the potential for social learning to achieve a more effective and inclusive response to climate change adaptation and mitigation, agriculture and food security;
- To provide evidence as to how social learning can ensure that research projects can improve and revise development targets by connecting scattered knowledge and expertise, and by ensuring that new research agendas can be more effective and relevant to community needs;
- To provide tools, approaches and an evidence base for 'mainstreaming' social learning methodologies into climate change, agriculture and food security projects where appropriate;
- To do research on ways of evaluating social learning methodologies, articulating clear indicators for success;
- To identify new implementing partnerships and new funding opportunities for projects that can explore or employ and evaluate social learning methodologies;
- To identify areas where projects and partners can learn together and take action together in developing

projects that will build the evidence base for building confidence in social learning methodologies;

- To organise a mechanism to elicit innovative approaches and feedback loops for joint working on social learning.

Adopting social learning as a central strategy means fundamentally changing our patterns for creating and sharing knowledge, in the following 5 key areas:

- 1. Documentation:** documenting social learning processes and their results is necessary to create an evidence base.
- 2. Embeddedness:** promoting and embedding social learning within research is required to change institutional paradigms.
- 3. Endogenous social learning:** the power of endogenous social learning processes must be recognised in order to co-learn with communities.
- 4. Social differentiation:** social differentiation must be adequately understood and addressed in order to safeguard equity and inclusion.
- 5. Timescales:** taking the different timescales involved in 'wicked' problems into account allows for recognition of competing short- and long-term interests.

The CCSL strategy is implemented by:

- **Establishing dialogues:** we will support a growing community of practice and look for ways to invite and encourage further participation and inclusiveness.
- **Supporting research:** we want to provide evidence on why and how social learning can bring about transformational change and delivery on developmental targets.
- **A process of documentation:** good documentation of tools, approaches, and examples of impact that emerge from this co-learning will be an essential part of mainstreaming this methodology and cultivating a new



way of working. Documentation includes primary research, literature reviews, case studies, and impact assessments, etc.

Under the CCSL Initiative, CCAFS, the Collaborative Adaptation Research Initiative in Africa and Asia (CARIAA) of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Canada and the Africa-based Food Systems Innovation for Food Security (FSIFS) programme of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) and Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) are pooling resources and working together to support and build a learning community that will work with them to formulate shared hypotheses and frameworks around social learning. This alliance of partners will invite further involvement from similar networks with shared interests. In order to facilitate collective action, the initiative will be governed by an independent advisory group.

Vision and hypotheses

Our vision: Social learning contributes to smarter, more effective R4D institutions (performance and processes) and helps them to achieve more sustainable, smarter development outcomes (results).

Phase 2 of the initiative will test the two hypotheses behind the CCSL vision:

Hypothesis A: social learning improves institutional processes and performance/effectiveness in the context of climate change.

Hypothesis B: social learning processes lead to improved development outcomes/results in the context of climate change.

Based on our research and experience, we assume that social learning can produce a positive impact for complex and uncertain challenges like climate change. However, we acknowledge that the body of evidence that supports this assumption is not currently robust or

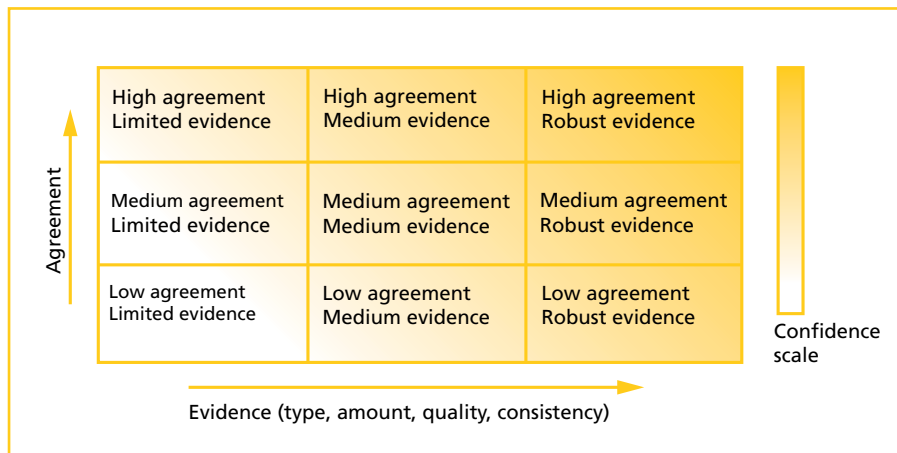


Figure 1. A depiction of evidence and agreement statements and their relationship to confidence. Confidence increases towards the top-right corner as suggested by the increasing strength of shading. Generally evidence is most robust when there are multiple, consistent independent lines of high-quality evidence.

clear enough (Harvey *et al.* 2013; Muro and Jeffrey 2008).

To address this evidence gap and to clarify the potential contribution of social learning to our own work the CCSL Initiative will set out to test the above hypotheses. IDRC’s CARIAA will lead the testing of the first hypothesis, while CCAFS and FSIFS will lead the testing of the second hypothesis.

Using pilot studies and systematic evidence gathering we will engage in a collective process of determining our degree of confidence in each hypothesis. This will be stated as a function of the strength of the evidence and degree of agreement on the interpretation of the evidence, along the lines of the table in Figure 1 (Mastrandrea *et al.* 2010).

CCSL Framework and Toolkit

A key instrument in our vision is a CCSL Framework and Toolkit, to be built on our legacy of work so far. The aim of this instrument is two-fold. The first aim is to inform the CCSL Initiative’s own process of development and learning — it is a roadmap for testing the hypotheses above. The second aim is to help anyone working on climate change issues and using a social

learning approach — whether within CGIAR or without — to access the best available knowledge, information and tools for selecting, implementing and documenting social learning methodologies.

The CCSL Framework and Toolkit will be an interactive online tool. Users will be able to select from 6 steps in the iterative process (see Figure 2) to gain access to a curated set of resources aimed at the successful implementation of a range of different social learning approaches. A narrative on the social learning process will introduce each set of resources and tie the steps together.

Intervention areas

Concrete activities for Phase 2 of the initiative include:

- **The Sandbox:** maintaining and developing the Wiki page and Yammer group, which are community spaces for reflection, innovation and learning.
- **The Framework and Toolkit:** this social learning tool will be developed as outlined above.
- **Innovation incubation:** organisations already using social learning approaches to address



climate change on the ground will be selected to pilot applications of social learning with short-term funding from CCSL. The pilot activities would be in line with their current goals and approaches, but would make use of the CCSL Framework and Toolkit. The aim is to rapidly collect evidence of benefits and limitations of the CCSL Framework and Toolkit, build the evidence base and document social learning initiatives from the outset.

- **Innovation fund:** building on the work of the incubation funding above, a full-fledged innovation fund will be developed to support projects using social learning approaches.
- **Action research:** the initiative will document and generate evidence on social learning and invite further dialogue and discussions on findings through the online community to build greater understanding of how the evidence speaks to particular contexts.
- **Capacity development:** for current and potential practitioners of social learning approaches.

Together the above activities should result in the following:

1. Strengthened evidence on the two hypotheses;
2. Testing of a methodology for guiding and supporting social learning;
3. Potentially improved development outcomes for the participating pilot initiatives.

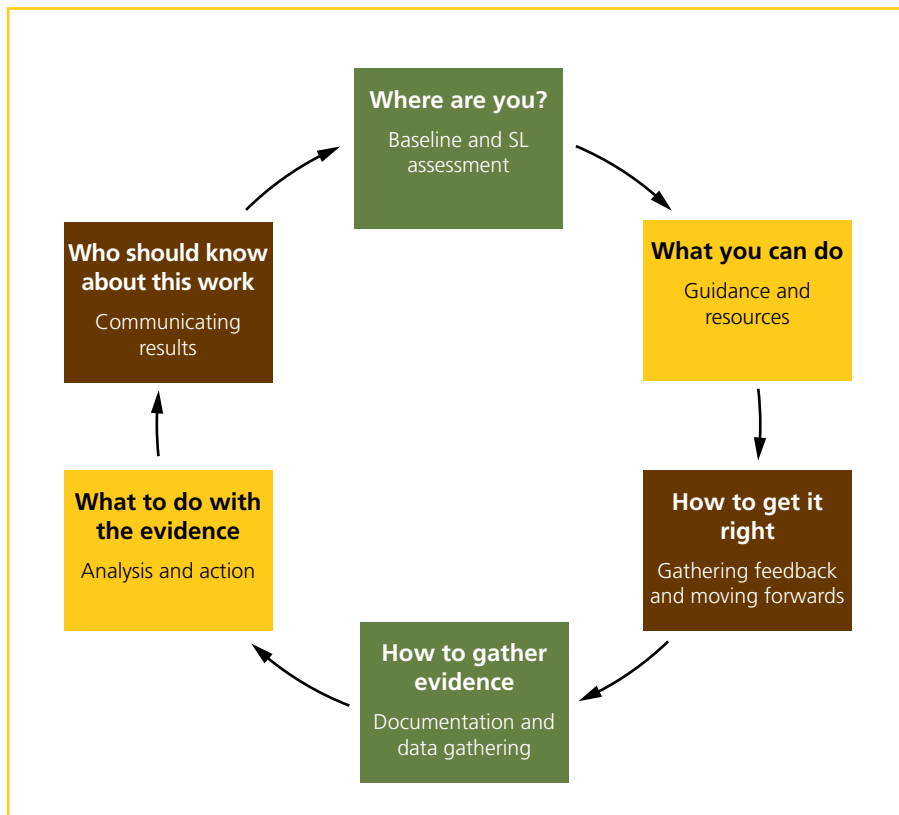


Figure 2. The six-step CCSL framework



Acknowledgements

We aim to practice what we preach. This briefing series is the product of an on-going social learning process—the Climate Change and Social Learning initiative (CCSL) — between the CCAFS team and its partners, in which knowledge has been co-constructed through many different channels, including workshops, the CCSL ‘Sandbox’, and social media. Many thanks to everyone who has participated in this process so far and to those who continue to do so.

CCSL Partners:

