

SciDev.Net User Survey 2009 Highlights

Introduction

SciDev.Net carried out a survey in August 2009 to: better understand who its users are, why they use the site and how they use it; to develop its relationship with users and respond to their needs; and to gather information on the impact of SciDev.Net's work. The survey focused on the three areas of content, audience and reach, and impact.

A link to the online survey was sent to 28,500 registrants and featured on the website during August. The survey closed on 7th September with 1420 responses.

The survey has gone a long way towards demonstrating the need and demand for SciDev.Net's work, though further investigation is required to develop specific stories of impact.

Selected broad conclusions

What do users think of SciDev.Net?

- There is a high level of satisfaction with the SciDev.Net site.
- Respondents hold the website in high regard and the majority would recommend it to their friends and colleagues. Developing country users are particularly proactive in recommending the site.
- Overall, the website and corresponding email alerts are on the right track and the work of SciDev.Net is seen as important.
- There was little negative feedback.

A selection of positive quotes from respondents:

You are the best science website I've ever visited. NGO, Sub-Saharan Africa

I thoroughly enjoy the diversity of the site... Without the weekly e-mail, I would probably forget about SciDev, and miss out on a great deal. Policy Maker, UK

The quality of the SciDev articles is consistently outstanding, and the subject matter is frequently cutting edge. I feel I really learn something from these articles, and they get me thinking more creatively. NGO, Europe (excluding UK)

Please keep up SciDev.Net - and it merits support from donors like World Bank, UNESCO, DFID. Private sector, UK

How do users value SciDev.Net?

- The site is particularly valued for highlighting important issues; its consistently interesting content; and for its emphasis on issues affecting developing countries.

- Spotlights are valued for their overviews, timely and relevant topics and additional resources.

What are SciDev.Net users' preferences?

- Overall, respondents are consistent in their topic interests from when they first registered with SciDev.Net, with Environment and Climate Change the most popular.
- Survey respondents from developing countries are most interested in material on the region in which they live, with Sub-Saharan Africa, then South-East Asia and South Asia the most popular regions on the website.

How aware are users of SciDev.Net?

- Recommendations from friends/colleagues and web searches are the most common way of first hearing about the site.
- Awareness is higher the longer the respondent has been using SciDev.Net and the more frequently they use the site.
- Emailing or discussions with colleagues are the most popular way of sharing SciDev.Net material.

What are the outcomes of using SciDev.Net material?

- SciDev.Net material was most commonly quoted as being used for increasing the respondent's awareness, understanding and knowledge.
- SciDev.Net has a significant impact on the knowledge and awareness of respondents.
- SciDev.Net allows Media respondents to develop their ability to communicate science; it helps Policy Makers make up their mind on critical issues; and makes respondents from both sectors more aware of the importance of science and technology.

Selected detailed conclusions

- 95% of respondents think the SciDev.Net website is excellent or good. 84% would recommend the site to others (over half (52%) would strongly recommend it and nearly a third (32%) would recommend it).
- Developing country users are more likely to strongly recommend the site (56%), and are more likely to proactively recommend SciDev.Net overall.
- Of the topics SciDev.Net offers, respondents were most interested in 'Environment' (61%), followed equally by 'Climate Change' and 'Science & Innovation Policy' (51%).
- In terms of topic-specific 'Spotlights', a significant majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed these provide an excellent overview of the topic being covered (84%); that the topics covered are timely (83%); that the topics covered are relevant to their interests

(82%); and that they find the additional resources contained in these, such as links and definitions, very useful (72%).

■ The majority of respondents were aware that SciDev.Net is a not-for-profit organisation (71%) and that its content is free for them to distribute (60%). Just over half (55%) were aware that the majority of SciDev.Net's content is produced by contributors from the developing world.

■ Only a third were aware that more than 90% of the stories on SciDev.Net are original content (36%) and that SciDev.Net provides science communication resources (32%). Just under a third were aware that SciDev.Net offers science communications training (28%).

A selection of quotes showing examples of how respondents use SciDev.Net

When we were reviewing our National Policy on Science and Technology I was referring to SciDev.Net as a reliable source of information regarding the role of S&T in national development.

Policy Maker, Sub-Saharan Africa

Have used the primers on science communication in a monthly newsletter with Hindi version for wide dissemination. Circulation of the newsletter is about 15000.

Policy Maker, South Asia

It has helped me most directly in that I have shared the information with those in India, China and Europe. Also I have made about 100 others aware of the website.

Consultant, North America

It has in particular, helped me to have an in-depth understanding of the said "Climate Change" and its consequences to human and all other living creatures. As I am a trainer at Forestry training Institution, more up to date scientific information on Environmental issues and forestry I get it from this link, and thus help me as a vivid case study to students...

Academic (Teaching), Sub-Saharan Africa

SciDev is my strength in terms of useful information for my professional career. I secured Commonwealth Professional Scholarship in 2005 and in 2007 I got Chinese Scholarship to attend a three week course on science and technology park planning and management through the information I got from SciDev

Policy Maker, Sub-Saharan Africa

It is the best update source of information I have on science and development. It helps me providing information, knowledge, reflections.

Academic (Research) Latin America and the Caribbean

Overall conclusion

Positive general feedback from respondents suggested that they see the website and its content as being reliable, accessible and useful. The main messages were:

- Keep up the good work;
- A strong appreciation for the email newsletters; and
- An acknowledgement of how important access to science and technology information is.

We are proud to acknowledge that the SciDev.Net website has a great many fans

Next steps for SciDev.Net

SciDev.Net staff will review the results of the 2009 survey closely, and draw on its conclusions in planning the further development of the website, thus helping to ensure that this responds to user needs and demands. The findings from the survey will also help to inform SciDev.Net's long-term strategy, as well as to improve the effectiveness of its work.

Final comments

SciDev.Net thanks all those who participated in the 2009 user survey. It was a long and detailed survey and we appreciate the time taken to provide us with this useful feedback to further develop the website.

APPENDIX A: Regional breakdown of respondents to the user survey

	Which region do you live in?	TOTAL	Proportion	
Developing Country Respondents	China	44	3%	
	Latin America & the Caribbean	195	14%	
	Middle East / North Africa	52	4%	
	South Asia	259	18%	
	South-East Asia	68	5%	
	Sub-Saharan Africa	340	24%	68%
Developed Country Respondents	North America	151	11%	
	Europe	158	11%	
	Australia	23	2%	
	Japan	2	0%	
	Singapore	7	0%	
	United Kingdom	106	8%	32%