



E-LEARNING COURSE REVIEWING IPCC ASSESSMENT REPORTS

Project closure report

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Introduction

The e-learning course has been a training for African climate experts in producing review comments on draft reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). It is a project funded by the Future Climate for Africa Program (FCFA) and the Climate & Development Knowledge Network (CDKN) and commissioned and hosted by SouthSouthNorth (SSN), from Cape Town, South Africa. The objective of the course was to increase the involvement of African experts and governments in the review process for the IPCC 6th Assessment Reports (including its Special Reports) with a view to enhancing both the scientific quality and policy relevance of the IPCC reports for African stakeholders. The motivation for this objective comes from the fact that participation from African authors and reviewers in the IPCC reports has been very low so far. While 17 % of the world population lives in Africa, for the 5th Assessment Report (AR5), only 0.2-2% of all review comments on draft reports came from the African continent. In addition, the majority of these reviewers have been from South Africa, while many other African countries have not participated in review rounds at all. The findings of the authoritative IPCC reports are used worldwide for the underpinning of local and regional climate policy making. The review process is an essential part of the IPCC procedures in preparing its reports. Critical review comments from all parts of the world are needed to improve the quality, clarity and policy relevance of these reports, including by introducing regional and local knowledge.

The training was aimed at African experts and IPCC governmental representatives on physical climate science, climate impacts, adaptation, vulnerability and mitigation. The course, delivered by distinguished international experts with extensive past involvement in the IPCC, has been a collaboration between SSN and the project leader [Dr Leo Meyer](#) from ClimateContact Consultancy, the Netherlands.

The full project consisted of three phases: Phase 1 and 2 (November 2017-March 2018 entailed the development of the e-learning course and a test run. Phase 3 I (April – September 2018) consisted of the further preparation of the curriculum, marketing and acquiring participants, the implementation of the course itself, and its evaluation. The e-learning course contained three webinars and interactive one-to-one training. During the development and the lead-up to the e-course, advice and guidance was provided by an Advisory Committee to the project – see Annex I for its members.

The marketing of the e-learning course

SSN took care of the ‘marketing’ of the course, while CC-C developed the content. Participants were mainly acquired through direct and personalized mailings among the network of the Future Climate for Africa program (FCFA) of SSN. The mailings included participants of meetings in 2016 that discussed enhancing African participation in the IPCC (UCL, London; IPCC-44, Bangkok). In addition, the IPCC Secretariat and TSUs informed their network through their social media and mailings. The Red Cross/red Crescent Climate Centre provided lists of the participants to the International Conference on Climate Risk Management in Nairobi in 2017. The governmental representatives in the IPCC from the African countries (IPCC Focal Points) were contacted directly. The Netherland delegation to the IPCC made an oral announcement of the course in the IPCC 48th plenary session in March.

The result has been that in total 360 persons, mainly from Africa but also from other parts of the world, registered for the webinars. See ANNEX 2 for a map with the geographical distribution.



A main tool for promoting the course was the [FCFA website](#) via its news pages, launched 3 May. Apart from explanation of the course and a link to the registration, the website contained inspiring video clips of members of the Advisory Committee, Dr Cheikh Mbow and Dr Youba Sokona. Guidance documents were uploaded with practical instructions on how to register on the IPCC website as an Expert. Other announcements were made on websites including those of [CDKN](#) and [START International](#).

The e-learning webinars

Three webinars, moderated by Karen Morris from SSN, were held through ZOOM video communications. The dates of the webinars were chosen within the review periods of two Draft IPCC Special Reports, enabling participants to apply the course content directly to reviewing upcoming IPCC reports:

- the Expert Review period for the First Order Draft of the Special Report on Climate Change and Land (FOD SRCCL), 11 June- 5 August 2018
- the Government review of the Final Draft Summary for Policy Makers of the Special report on Global Warming of 1.5 degrees (SPM SR1.5). 4 June – 29 July 2018

Webinar (1) was about [how does the IPCC work](#), 5 June 2018: explanation of the course and its objectives and a general introduction to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change IPCC. Course presenters: Leo Meyer and Jean-Pascal van Ypersele.

Webinar (2) provided the guidance on [How to conduct an IPCC review](#), 7 June 2018: Explanation of the IPCC review process and procedures, and guidance with do's and don'ts for reviewers. Course presenters: Jean-Pascal van Ypersele and Leo Meyer

Webinar (3) gave an [In-depth review analysis and further guidance](#), 19 June 2018: Outstanding questions from participants; reviewing uncertainties and robustness; issues for Africa. Course presenters: Leo Meyer, Arthur Petersen, Yacob Mulugetta.

The webinars lasted about one hour each, including a moderated Q&A session. Questions were submitted through a ZOOM chat function. Those questions that could not be answered online were taken up after the webinars and posted with the answers on the [FCFA website](#).

Attendance and evaluation of the webinars

Although 360 individuals had registered to the course, the numbers of registrants that participated in the live Webinars in June were less: 85 individuals attended Webinar 1, 70 on Webinar 2, and 34 on Webinar 3. In total there were 121 unique attendees of the webinars. Following the live sessions, 142 persons watched (part of) the recording of Webinar 1, 103 persons Webinar 2, and 41 persons Webinar 3, on the FCFA Youtube channel.

Each webinar was directly followed by a poll to the attendees in order to find out how the webinar had been valued. The polls contained questions such as: 'did I gain new knowledge', 'what was the quality of the presentations' and 'did the webinar motivate me to start reviewing IPCC reports'. On the average, the presentations scored a 'four' on a five points scale, which means that the webinars were generally well received. However, not all attendees responded to the polls, so the evaluation may be incomplete: the response ratio was 51 % after Webinar 1, 34% after Webinar 2, and 29 % after Webinar 3.



All three presentations have been recorded and are made available on the SSN Youtube channel through the [FCFA website](#). The PowerPoints that have been used are posted on the website as well.

At the Q&A sessions, some participants raised fundamental questions such as: ‘*why should we spend time on reviewing IPCC reports – what is in it for us?*’ And: ‘*what is the use of IPCC assessment reports anyway if all scientific literature on climate change is already available in publications?*’ We addressed these issues in the announcements, but with hindsight, these aspects would have deserved more attention, both in the marketing and in the webinars itself.

One-to-one review feedback

The registrants to the webinars were invited to submit draft comments to the trainers on the two Special Reports: the Experts on the First Draft on the Special Report on Climate Change and Land, and the Governments on the final draft SPM of the Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 degrees.

The trainers/presenters were available to provide feedback on a one-to-one confidential basis with a view to put in practice the review skills that were taught in the webinars. 26 individuals registered for this feedback part and they were divided over the 4 trainers. Of this group, 13 individuals (all Africans) submitted draft comments (all on the SRCL) and received personal and confidential feedback from the trainers in individual email exchanges. The participants reviewed specific parts of specific chapters of their choice – as it is not feasible for anyone to review a full draft IPCC report of >1000 pages on one’s own. Both trainers and the reviewer students very much appreciated the direct, interactive and personal communications. All 13 participants uploaded their final comments to the IPCC, 12 Experts and one Government representative.

Experiences from the 4 trainers indicate that while some reviewers produced comments that could, in our view, lead to significant improvements of the draft texts, others had more difficulties. For some it was the first time ever to review (part of) a report of this nature, and they experienced difficulties to critically judge a scientific text. These participants would probably have appreciated more interactive and practical training than we could deliver in this course.

Project results – did we enhance African participation in IPCC reviews?

All presenters/trainers feel that the whole course has been useful and effective. The IPCC WG III TSU has provided us the numbers of reviewers that had both submitted review comments to the IPCC and had registered for our course. By comparing their lists of registrants with ours they found 24 expert reviewers from Africa on the SRCL. We have sent a Google doc query to our registrants, and from that group, 40 African individuals reported to have submitted expert reviews to the IPCC (of which 36 to the SRCL and 4 to the SR1.5). The difference in numbers may be caused by errors in filling out the Google doc query, and/or delivering comments after the deadline – it’s not possible to filter these options out. According the IPCC, there were 312 reviewers that have submitted comments on the FOD SRCL, of which 24 had registered to our course. That would lead to a 7.7% review participation score for Africa. This is already considerably higher than in previous IPCC reports (AR5 draft assessment reports: 0.5-2 %; First Order Draft Special Report on Global warming of 1.5 degrees: 5%). In total, The IPCC WG III TSU reported that 50 reviewers have registered to the IPCC under an African country. This means an unprecedented high score of African reviewers in a draft IPCC report of 16%, of which about half can be attributed to the e-learning course.



Network formation

We invited the registrants to the e-learning course to share their contact details with other registrants, with a view to form a network for future communication on reviewing IPCC reports, information exchange, and possible future co-operation on climate research and action. 138 registrants have agreed to do this, and we have established and communicated a database for them to keep them informed of future IPCC milestones and link them into the Future Climate for Africa network.

Evaluation

A debriefing has been held with the presenters/ trainers and SSN. The project was considered as a success since it has met its objective (African participation in the review of IPCC reports has been enhanced considerably), at least for the draft Special Report on Climate Change and Land, compared to earlier IPCC reports. However, there would be room for improvement if the e-learning course would be repeated next year for the reviews of the first drafts main 6th Assessment IPCC reports¹. Of course, that would be contingent to the availability of timely funding and personal resources. Suggestions included:

- Increasing accessibility for Francophone Africa. A large part of Africa consists of French speaking countries. Review comments on IPCC reports have to be delivered in English, but some support to French speaking experts and governments could be provided for instance by trainers who are proficient in both English and French, and by arranging subtitles for presentations. That may stimulate bringing in local/regional French literature on climate change issues that have not been assessed so far by the IPCC. It is important to note that the IPCC procedures allow references to articles or reports in other languages than English, if these contain an abstract or and executive summary in English.
- More interactive training facilities and help for first-time reviewers
- Expansion of the participation in Webinars to Latin America and South-East Asia
- Connection to UN education and training facilities such as under [UNFCCC](#) and [UNITAR](#)

A proposal for further work on these suggestions may be submitted later this year to SSN/CDKN.

¹ The review periods of the First Order Drafts of the Working Group 6th Assessment Report of the IPCC are currently planned as followed: Working Group I: 29 April-23 June 2019, Working Group II: 21 October – 16 December 2019, Working Group III: 9 December 2019 – 31 January 2020



ANNEX I: Advisory Committee members to the e-learning project

[Dr Youba Sokona](#), Special Advisor for Sustainable Development at the South Centre and IPCC Vice-Chair;

[Dr Cheikh Mbow](#), Executive Director of START International in Washington and IPCC lead author

[Prof. Arthur Petersen](#), Professor at the Department of Science, Technology, Engineering and Public Policy (STePP), University College London (UCL).

[Prof Yacob Mulugetta](#), Professor of Energy and Development Policy, Department of Science, Technology, Engineering & Public Policy (STePP), University College London (UCL)

[Prof Jean-Pascal van Ypersele](#), Former IPCC Vice-Chair (2008-2015), Professor at Université catholique de Louvain (Belgium)

[Jean-Pierre Roux](#), [SouthSouthNorth \(SSN\)](#), principal of the e-learning project, manager of [the Future Climate for Africa](#) programme and of CDKN technical assistance projects in East Africa.

ANNEX II: Geographical distribution of registrants to the e-learning course.

The interest in the course was wide-spread over the whole globe, with a focus on African countries, in total 360 persons registered. The figures in circles represent the registered numbers of individuals. A part has followed the live webinars, others have consulted the Webinar recordings and/or PowerPoints. The large numbers of registrants from Nigeria (63) and Kenya (28) are striking. The 26 participants to the one-to-one feedback part have been restricted to the African continent only.

