Struggling to mainstream climate issues?

Lessons learnt from CDKN's knowledge brokering experience

CDKN

Climate & Development Knowledge Network

Challenge 6

When gatekeeping and bureaucracy become obstacles to project progress

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Cover Image: Extinction rebellion protests in Buenos Aires, Argentina in September 2019. *Extinction Rebellion Argentina*

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Participants involved in *Pani Chautari* multi-stakeholder platform addressing water challenges in Nepal. *SIAS*

Introduction

Background

Since 2010, the Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN) has supported decision-makers in designing and delivering climate-resilient development in focal countries in Africa, Latin America and South Asia through a combination of knowledge, research and advisory support. Our approach has been to facilitate locally-owned and -led processes, working in partnership with governmental and non-governmental actors at multiple scales.

Through this work we have become aware of the important, often invisible, role that 'intermediaries' or 'brokers' play in linking knowledge producers with knowledge users, and in managing complex processes for effective decisions and actions on climate change. In 2018, we shifted our attention to focus on knowledge brokering to help accelerate and amplify climate action. We work closely with stakeholders to promote evidence-based decision-making by fostering learning, collaboration and leadership through capacity strengthening and integrating diverse types of knowledge.

Along the way, CDKN has sought to document our learning and that of our partners to better understand how knowledge and evidence of climate change can inform and translate into policy and action. This reflection process has investigated different tools and approaches for enhancing the use of knowledge in decision-making, the barriers encountered in facilitating change, and the lessons that may be useful for others who are navigating similar challenges.

The lessons showcased in this document initially emerged during a series of learning exchanges that brought together CDKN's partners in Asia and Africa to discuss the ways in which they had sought to mainstream climate issues in decision-making processes. They identified core challenges that they had come across during these processes and brainstormed different solutions and approaches to overcome them. A series of detailed interviews with CDKN's different focal country partners followed, to identify, document and share some of the strategies and approaches they had used.

As a result of this learning work, we identified seven **challenges** to mainstreaming climate issues across governance scales and sectors, including with national to local government decision-makers and community members on the ground. These seven challenges have been used to structure this series. Each challenge has a number of **pathways** and **case studies** that demonstrate the knowledge brokering approaches that were used, as well as **key takeaways** that exemplify the main lessons learned in each of the case studies. This series is not intended as a definitive guide about climate mainstreaming, but we hope that others may gain some tips about knowledge brokering approaches and tools that could help as they seek to integrate knowledge about climate issues into their own contexts.

IT IS HOPED THAT THE LESSONS PRESENTED HERE CAN:

Influence researchers and decision-makers about the importance of knowledge brokering

Enable learning exchanges with other knowledge brokers in the global South

Encourage donors to think differently about the design of future programmes, to ensure sufficient time for impact and openness to being adaptive as new demands emerge

What is knowledge brokering and who are knowledge brokers?

Knowledge brokering is the process of moving knowledge into action. Knowledge brokers link producers of knowledge and users of knowledge to facilitate the generation, dissemination and eventual use of that knowledge.[1] The range of activities they are involved in can be understood along a spectrum that goes from working with information flows to seeking to bring about systemic change (see figure below). Whilst knowledge brokers have often focused on making knowledge more relevant and accessible (the left-hand side of the spectrum), the scale and urgency of the climate crisis today calls for knowledge brokering practice to move towards innovation brokering (on the right side of the spectrum).[2]

INFORMATIONAL ••••••••••••••••••••••••• • RELATIONAL •••••••••••••••••••••••••• • SYSTEMS

INFOMEDIARY
Enabling access to information from multiple sources
- Online climate portal
- Library/information centre

KNOWLEDGE TRANSLATOR
Tailoring information to be relevant and credible for different audiences
- Policy brief for decision-makers
- Mobile phone-based weather advisory service

KNOWLEDGE CO-CREATOR
Connecting stakeholders to co-create knowledge and improve its use in decision-making
- Multi-stakeholder processes bringing together diverse knowledge types
- Peer learning in a demonstration farm

INNOVATION BROKER
Influencing the wider context and seeking to bring about systemic change and innovation
- Street theatre challenging patriarchal norms
- Cross-ministerial collaboration to overcome sectoral silos

Linear dissemination of knowledge from producer to user

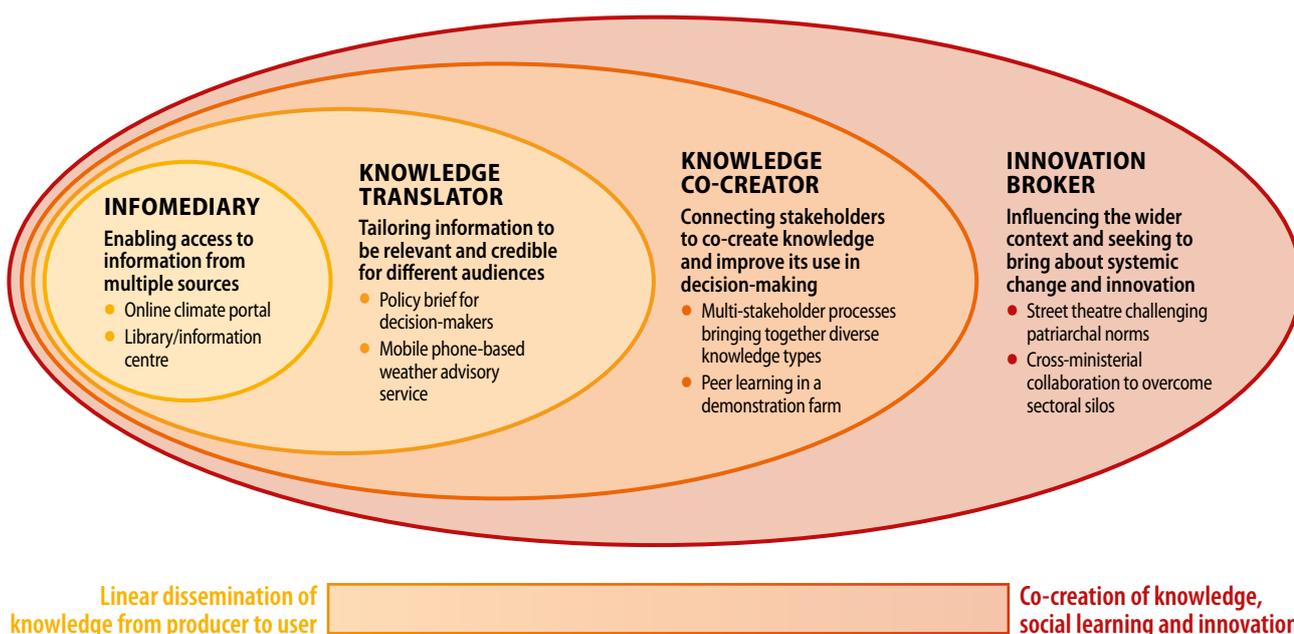Co-creation of knowledge, social learning and innovation

FIGURE 1   Spectrum of knowledge broker roles, adapted from Harvey et al. (2012)[3] and Shaxson et al. (2012).[4]

This series is structured as follows:

| CHALLENGE	HOW KNOWLEDGE BROKERS CAN RESPOND
1 Key stakeholders lack sufficient information about the significance and urgency of climate change	Build a critical mass of tailored and accessible knowledge, highlighting the extent of climate change impacts on different sectors or groups. Knowledge, however, is not sufficient by itself, and needs to be combined with a range of engagement strategies, including to collaboratively develop responses to the challenges being faced.
2 Climate change is not sufficiently high on political agendas or part of institutional mandates	Invest time and effort in understanding the governance landscape. Be creative at finding different ways of aligning your messages with government policies, visions and mandates.
3 Climate change is mainly seen as an environmental responsibility, with little cross-sector collaboration	Assist by creating or building on existing platforms for different stakeholders to discuss climate issues and strengthen relationships.
4 Subnational actors lack guidance and support to implement climate change frameworks set at the national level	Provide support through existing vertical government and governance structures; mainstream climate issues into other related, better-decentralised sectors; or collaborate with strategic institutions to advance the climate mainstreaming process.
5 Limited capacities and resource allocation prevent climate change integration and implementation	Think carefully about the medium of knowledge transfer beyond outputs. Do this by co-organising training and engagement activities jointly with stakeholders and promoting learning and understanding about climate resilience from on-the-ground experience.
6 When gatekeeping and bureaucracy become obstacles to project progress	Know your context well, using multiple tactics while maintaining flexibility. Work both with government actors with continuity in the system and in partnership with other key actors to overcome challenges.
7 Limited support hinders climate integration at the community level	Connect local groups to different sources of knowledge and to intermediaries that can enhance access to specific resources.

FIGURE 2 CDKN focal countries featured in this case study series.
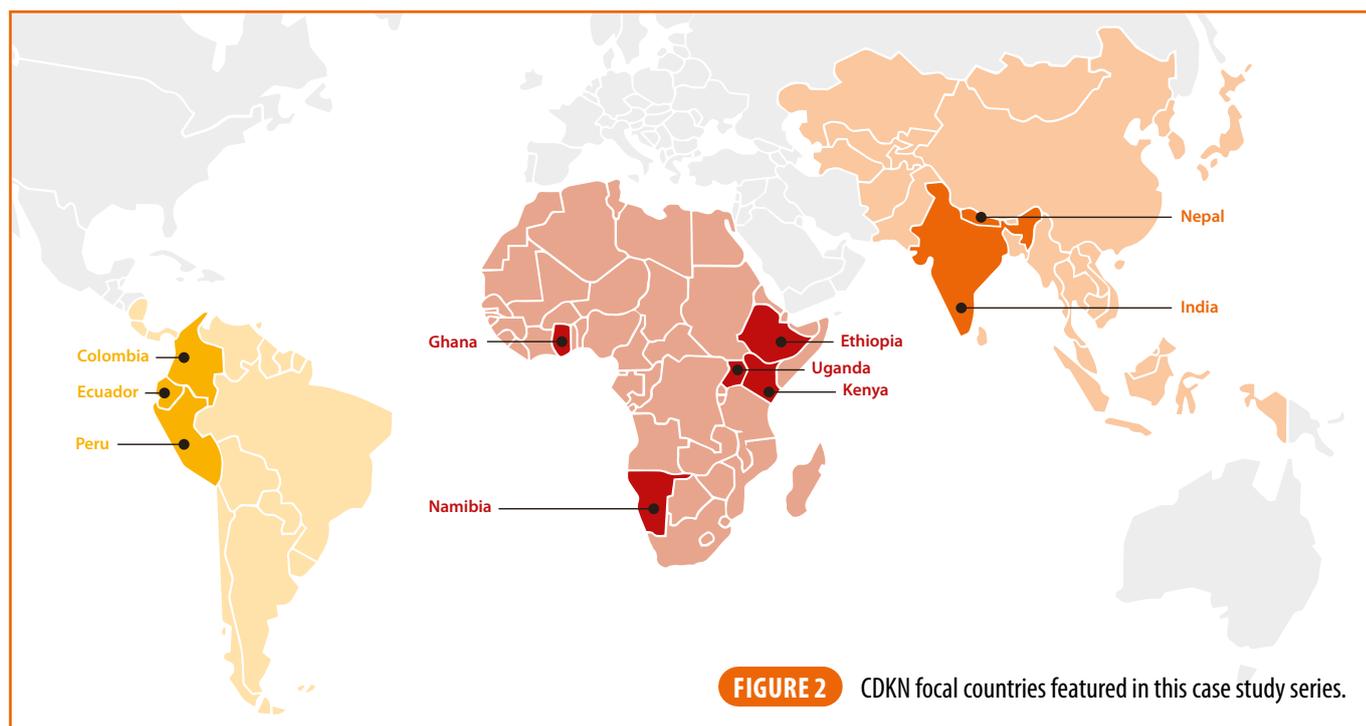
Challenge 6:

When gatekeeping and bureaucracy become obstacles to project progress

CASE STUDIES

PATHWAY A

Work in partnership with a range of key actors, including government representatives with continuity in the system

NAMIBIA
Working around and with gatekeepers: Insights from **Namibia's** climate efforts

NEPAL
Cultivating ownership of the *Pani Chautari* multi-stakeholder process across levels in **Nepal**

ECUADOR
Leveraging multi-sectoral collaboration in **Ecuador** to drive action when government resources are stretched

PATHWAY B

Know your context well, use multiple tactics and maintain flexibility

NAMIBIA
Navigating complexity through flexible, multi-tactic approaches in **Namibia**

KENYA
Repositioning efforts in response to changing government mandates in **Nairobi**

ETHIOPIA
Using the right government entry point for advancing climate change and gender integration in **Ethiopia**

Stakeholder engagement workshop in Namibia. *CDKN and UNAM*

Water user associations were critical members in shaping the *Pani Chautari* in Nepal. *CDKN*

When gatekeeping and bureaucracy become obstacles to project progress

Mainstreaming processes require knowledge brokers to skilfully navigate political landscapes, which are often characterised by complex and slow-moving bureaucratic systems. These systems can hinder progress, making it difficult to understand requirements and achieve desired outcomes. Individuals within these structures may act as gatekeepers or bottlenecks, delaying responses from government partners and stalling initiatives. To overcome these challenges, knowledge brokers must develop a deep understanding of their context and adopt a range of tactics and channels to move things forward. Building strong relationships with allies, both within and outside of government, is essential to bypass institutional barriers. Flexibility and persistence are key, but knowledge brokers must also be willing to pivot or abandon strategies that prove ineffective.

PATHWAY A

Work in partnership with a range of key actors, including government representatives with continuity in the system

NAMIBIA
Working around and with gatekeepers: Insights from **Namibia's** climate efforts

1. Raising gatekeepers' awareness of a project's key issues helps them understand the urgency and value of the work, and can unlock action. Demonstrating effective approaches can be a powerful way to build this understanding.
2. Sensitising senior staff can unlock junior staff involvement and collaboration in project activities.
3. Engaging continuously – through capacity strengthening and open dialogue on challenges and opportunities – builds trust and commitment, encouraging proactive participation from government staff.

NEPAL
Cultivating ownership of the *Pani Chautari* multi-stakeholder process across levels in **Nepal**

1. Co-developing the *Pani Chautari's* structure and process with stakeholders, including the municipality, ensured it has been a co-owned initiative from the start.
2. Involving stakeholders in the research process – from collecting data to co-producing knowledge and deliberating on findings – strengthened their commitment and contributed to more inclusive outcomes.
3. Building trust through continuous formal and informal engagements between the research team and the municipality was key to sustaining the process and fostering long-term institutional support.

ECUADOR
Leveraging multi-sectoral collaboration in **Ecuador** to drive action when government resources are stretched

1. Supporting overworked and understaffed ministries by assigning a project team member to coordinate the activities of the Technical Table on Gender and Climate Change helped accelerate progress.
2. Working with a clearly identified government focal point, reachable through multiple communication channels, facilitated issue resolution and follow-up.
3. Collaborating with partners who share a common mission enables mutual encouragement and the ability to apply constructive pressure on government counterparts to maintain momentum.

Work in partnership with a range of key actors, including government representatives with continuity in system

Working in partnership with a range of key actors, including from government, is essential for navigating complex bureaucratic systems. Collaborating with these partners helps build a critical mass of engaged stakeholders who can tackle challenges from multiple angles. Such partnerships foster mutual encouragement and provide vital support to over-stretched government institutions. In particular, cultivating relationships with well-networked, embedded government actors who remain in place across administrative cycles can be instrumental in opening doors, identifying effective pathways forward and sustaining momentum. Allies are needed at both the senior political level – to provide mandates and legitimacy – and at the technical officer level to drive progress and operationalise initiatives. Building these relationships, both formally and informally, not only facilitates action but also fosters ownership of the issues, contributing to their long-term institutionalisation.
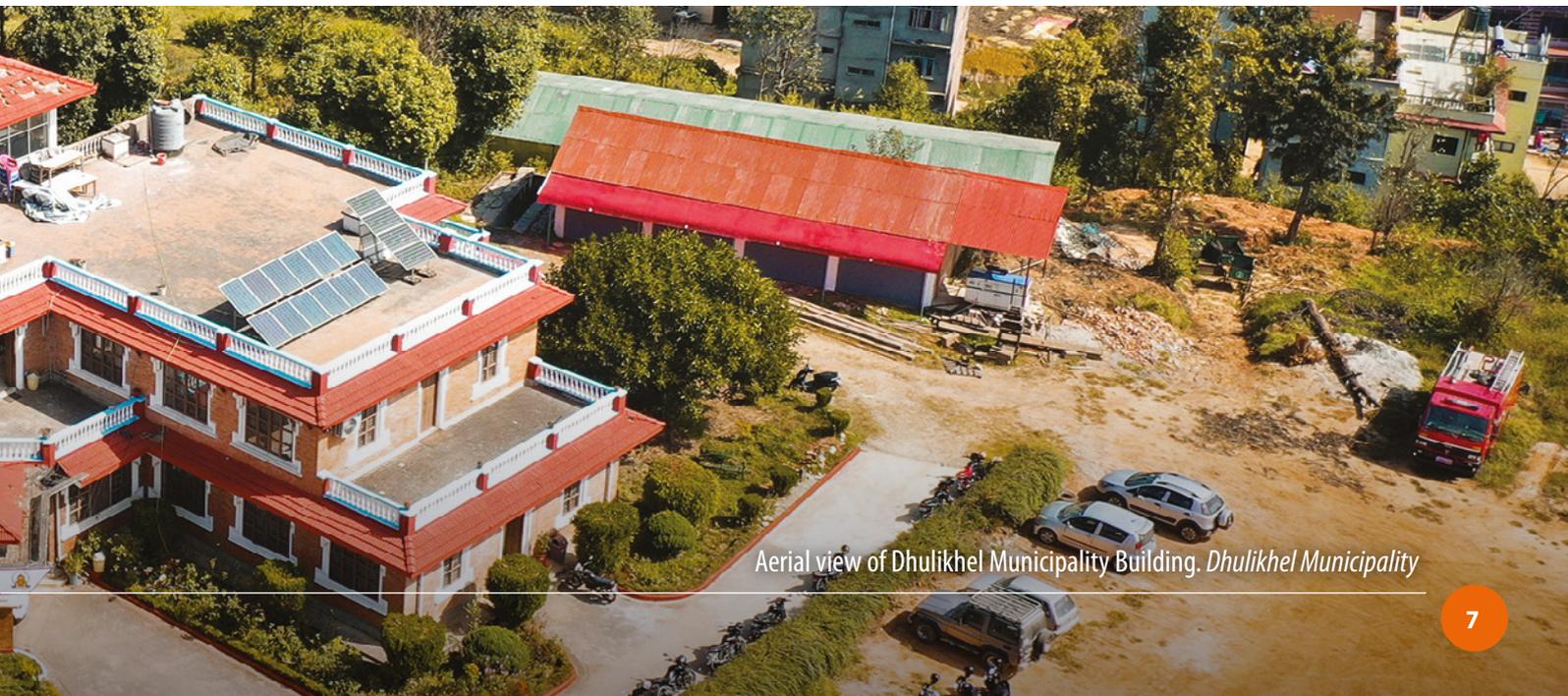
Aerial view of Dhulikhel Municipality Building. *Dhulikhel Municipality*

NAMIBIA

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Raising gatekeepers' awareness of a project's key issues helps them understand the urgency and value of the work, and can unlock action. Demonstrating effective approaches can be a powerful way to build this understanding.

2. Sensitising senior staff can unlock junior staff involvement and collaboration in project activities.

3. Engaging continuously – through capacity strengthening and open dialogue on challenges and opportunities – builds trust and commitment, encouraging proactive participation from government staff.

> There are no gatekeepers. There are only uninformed people who don't understand why they have to deal with a certain issue, and people with rigid personalities who will not change their ways."
>
> – Margaret Angula, Namibia project lead

Working around and with gatekeepers: Insights from **Namibia's** climate efforts

In their efforts to mainstream climate issues, the CDKN Namibia team engaged in a range of activities and learned two key strategies for dealing with gatekeepers: keeping them informed of relevant issues and requesting that they **release their staff to work directly with the project team**. Over time, gatekeepers often began attending project meetings themselves, particularly once they recognised the value of the issues being discussed, such as through evidence demonstrating the urgency of climate-related matters.

The team also observed that government officials frequently operated under different objectives and motivations. Their participation in workshops or tasks was typically guided by mandates from their superiors or **aligned with their annual plans**. In some cases, junior officials asked CDKN team members to speak directly with their supervisors to obtain approval for certain actions. Often, they did not share the same self-drive or alignment with the interests of the project team.


▲ Stakeholders involved in capacity strengthening activities. *CDKN and UNAM*

To foster willing and proactive participation and support, the team recognised the importance of engaging and capacitating government staff. Their approach included sharing research evidence on climate change impacts, clarifying government departments' mandates, and explaining the significance of specific issues – such as the need to **decentralise climate action**. In some instances, one-on-one meetings were held with senior officials with whom the team had built trusted relationships. These meetings served to clarify the team's objectives, identify areas where support was needed, and gather feedback on how best to proceed, including advice on engaging with specific departments or individuals.

"
You need to understand the people coming from the Ministry, even if you know they are the main driver and focal point of the UNFCCC. Sometimes you have to use tools that help to bring things out of them, sometimes you are just facilitating."

– Margaret Angula, Namibia project lead
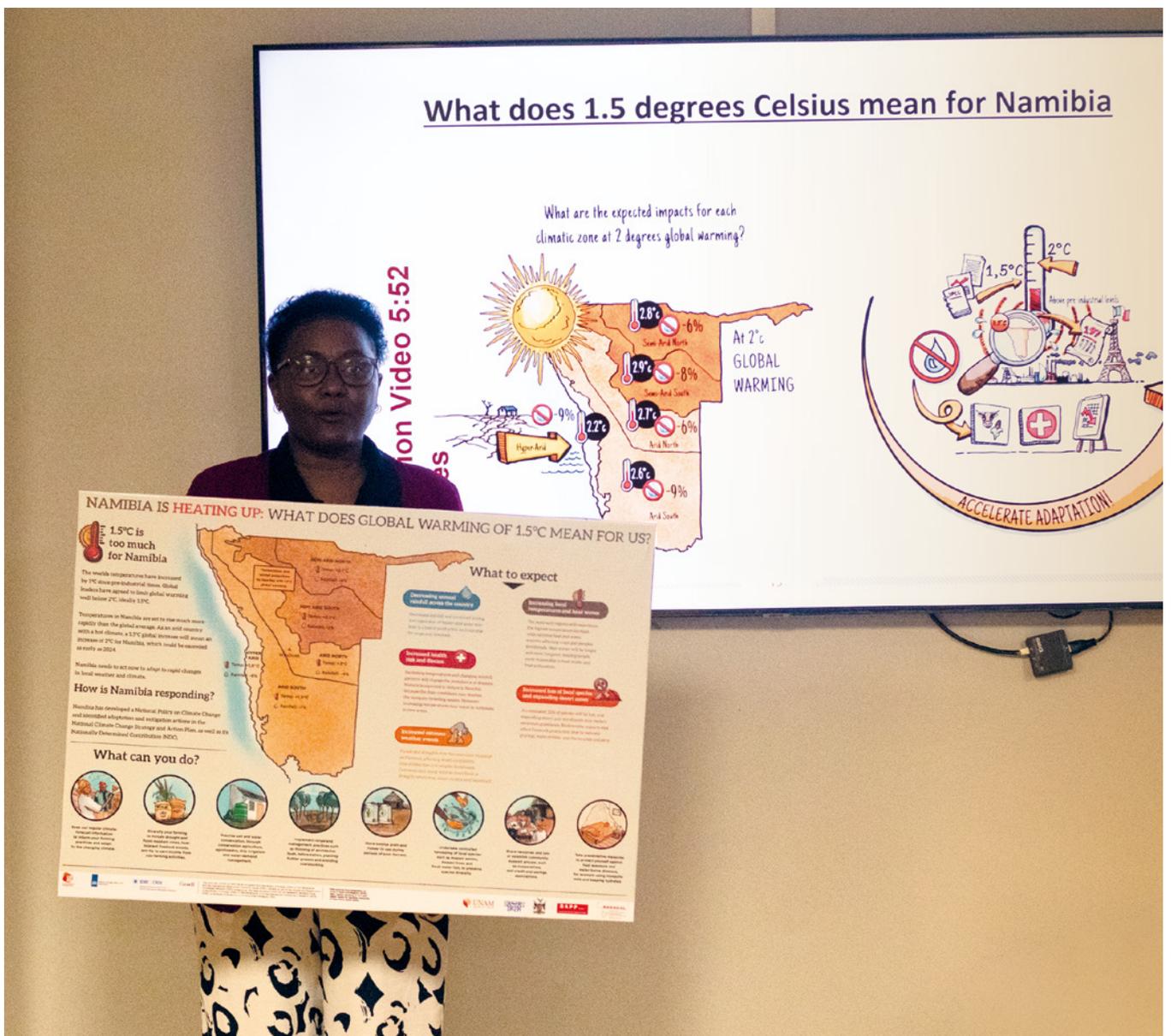
▲ Margaret Angula, CDKN's Namibia team lead, explains the impacts of rising temperatures on different national sectors. *CDKN and UNAM.*

NEPAL

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Co-developing the *Pani Chautari's* structure and process with stakeholders, including the municipality, ensured it has been a co-owned initiative from the start.

2. Involving stakeholders in the research process – from collecting data to co-producing knowledge and deliberating on findings – strengthened their commitment and contributed to more inclusive outcomes.

3. Building trust through continuous formal and informal engagements between the research team and the municipality was key to sustaining the process and fostering long-term institutional support.

CASE STUDY

Cultivating ownership of the *Pani Chautari* multi-stakeholder process across levels in **Nepal**

The *Pani Chautari* process – a series of multi-stakeholder evidence-informed dialogues aimed at finding solutions to Dhulikhel's water challenges – has been co-owned by the Dhulikhel municipality and the town's water-related stakeholders since its inception. The first dialogue, convened by the Southasia Institute of Advanced Studies (SIAS), brought together representatives from local political parties, community water users, women's groups and forestry officers. During this initial meeting, participants discussed the idea of creating a platform to address water issues and considered how its membership should be structured, including whether it should have fixed regular members.

In the second dialogue, stakeholders agreed on a **series of steps to guide the *Pani Chautari*** and selected a name for the platform. Once the steps were established, stakeholders actively participated in each phase – from identifying key issues for discussion, to **contributing to the research process** by collecting data and deliberating on emerging results. For example, local community members were trained to measure water quantity using the bucket method and a stopwatch, and shared their findings with the research team via Facebook messenger. Local academic institutions and experts also collaborated in co-producing the knowledge that was presented and deliberated in the dialogues. This **close involvement throughout the process** helped foster a strong sense of ownership among participants.

To deepen engagement and collaboration, SIAS partnered with stakeholders and external actors to co-host events such as training programmes and roundtable discussions. These gatherings provided a shared space for prioritising water security and strengthening relationships. Collaboration between SIAS, Tribhuvan University and local experts helped build trust among stakeholders and communities. A memorandum of understanding with the Central Campus of Technology further supported efforts to explore institutional mechanisms for inclusive and equitable water governance.

The diverse actors involved quickly recognised the value of having a regular platform to engage on water management concerns. The *Pani Chautari* enabled them to address existing conflicts by incorporating multiple perspectives and fostering more equitable, accepted and locally-owned solutions.

As co-host of the *Pani Chautari*, the Dhulikhel municipality was kept at the forefront of decision-making through a relationship of trust and partnership that was built over time. This was nurtured through continuous engagement with municipal officials via both formal and informal channels, such as invitations to SIAS-organised events or national and international conferences, informal chats over tea, joint field visits, and technical support on water management, policy processes and strategic planning. These interactions helped strengthen municipal capacities and deepen their understanding of the importance of evidence-based decision-making.

This long-term engagement led the Dhulikhel Municipality to take greater interest in and ownership of the *Pani Chautari* outcomes. By formally inviting relevant stakeholders, including water user committees, upstream municipalities or wards and women's groups, to participate, the municipality facilitated meaningful discussions that ultimately led to the institutionalisation of the *Pani Chautari* as a Water Council.

▲ Stakeholders were deeply involved in designing the *Pani Chautari* structure and process. *Dipika Das, SIAS*

ECUADOR

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1 Supporting overworked and understaffed ministries by assigning a project team member to coordinate the activities of the Technical Table on Gender and Climate Change helped accelerate progress.

2 Working with a clearly identified government focal point, reachable through multiple communication channels, facilitated issue resolution and follow-up.

3 Collaborating with partners who share a common mission enables mutual encouragement and the ability to apply constructive pressure on government counterparts to maintain momentum.

Leveraging multi-sectoral collaboration in **Ecuador** to drive action when government resources are stretched

The multi-stakeholder, multi-sectoral **Technical Table on Gender and Climate Change** (the Table) in Ecuador has been instrumental in advancing the gender- climate nexus in the country. Although the Ministry of Environment holds the formal responsibility for integrating gender considerations into climate programmes and initiatives, the Table's horizontal structure and shared ownership have enabled broader collaboration. Initially supported by the CDKN team, and now by other civil society organisations, these partners have taken on key coordination tasks, including organising meetings, setting agendas, and preparing minutes.

A key enabler of progress has been the appointment of a dedicated individual responsible for preparing and compiling the necessary documentation for each meeting. This person also liaises with the Ministry counterpart to secure endorsement and facilitate wider dissemination. In a context where environment ministries are often understaffed and overextended, this arrangement has helped maintain momentum and efficiency.

The collaborative development of the **climate finance course** – led by GIZ, the Andina University and CDKN – further illustrates the value of partnership. It allowed individuals from each organisation to apply pressure when bottlenecks arose, while also encouraging mutual accountability and sustained focus on shared objectives. Crucially, having a clearly identified focal point within the Ministry – complete with a name, surname, and WhatsApp contact – ensured there was always someone to follow up with, helping to drive progress and maintain continuity.

▲ Participant of climate change and gender training. *CDKN and FFLA*

PATHWAY B

Know your context well, use multiple tactics and maintain flexibility

NAMIBIA

Navigating complexity through flexible, multi-tactic approaches in **Namibia**

1. Devising a range of continuously evolving, evidence- informed strategies fosters stakeholder buy-in and helps navigate bureaucratic constraints.
2. Embracing openness and flexibility to learn, especially from stakeholders, is essential for meaningful progress.
3. Slowing the pace to allow issues to settle with stakeholders can yield deeper, longer-term impact than rigidly adhering to deadlines.

KENYA

Repositioning efforts in response to changing government mandates in **Nairobi**

1. Engaging directly with key actors, such as government agencies, helps knowledge brokers align their efforts with real and current needs, ensuring relevance and impact.
2. Adapting strategy when external circumstances shift, even when a particular approach is already well developed, is essential for remaining effective and responsive.
3. Keeping a finger on the pulse of political and institutional dynamics enables knowledge brokers to seize emerging opportunities and respond to shifting mandates with agility.

ETHIOPIA

Using the right government entry point for advancing climate change and gender integration in **Ethiopia**

1. Working with Ethiopia's Ministry of Finance opened doors to other sectors and provided a stable partner with strong operating systems and institutional memory.
2. Navigating shifting institutional mandates is enabled by a solid base of trust, built through joint ownership of initiatives from the outset and supported by multiple strategies to help government partners advance their agenda.

Know your context well, use multiple tactics and maintain flexibility

Knowledge brokers need to allocate sufficient time to test and learn what works within their specific socio-cultural, political and governance context. Much of this learning happens through trial and error, using a variety of tactics and channels until a breakthrough is achieved. This process demands patience, persistence and, most importantly, a sustained presence in the area, which enables deeper learning and smoother processes over time. Flexibility is also essential for responding to emerging gaps and shifting course when needed. Crucially, this adaptability must be supported by project donors, as rigid logframes, timelines, and predefined outputs or outcomes can conflict with an adaptive, opportunistic approach that leverages unpredictable windows of opportunity.

Pedestrian and road traffic in Nairobi, analysed as part of non-motorised transport study.. *CDKN and Tribesman Pictures*

NAMIBIA

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1 Devising a range of continuously evolving, evidence-informed strategies fosters stakeholder buy-in and helps navigate bureaucratic constraints.

2 Embracing openness and flexibility to learn, especially from stakeholders, is essential for meaningful progress.

3 Slowing the pace to allow issues to settle with stakeholders can yield deeper, longer-term impact than rigidly adhering to deadlines.

> Even during the meeting, if people reveal new information and we realise we are two steps ahead, we have to take a step back. It's frustrating but you have to be realistic. People are thinking also, just like you – they are processing information, and you have to give them time."
>
> *– Margaret Angula, Namibia project lead*

CASE STUDY

Navigating complexity through flexible, multi-tactic approaches in **Namibia**

Over eight years of research-for-impact activities in Namibia, the team gained valuable insights about navigating complex systems and fostering meaningful change. One major lesson was the importance of employing diverse strategies to overcome bureaucratic hurdles. These strategies had to continuously evolve as the **team's understanding of the context** deepened. Engaging hard-to-reach stakeholders required persistence and creativity: team members used every available channel – email, phone, WhatsApp, one-on-one meetings (often supported by research evidence presented via PowerPoint to catch stakeholders' interest), or leveraging personal contacts to open doors. Progress was often delayed by high turnover within government departments, with meetings sometimes only yielding results once the appropriate focal person was identified. This typically occurred after stakeholders had observed the team's sustained engagement and passed on invitations to more senior or relevant colleagues. As the team became more embedded in the system, their influence grew – evidenced, for example, by the increasing number of invitations to strategic meetings where they could help shape discussions.

▲ Tools like stakeholder and power mapping are essential for understanding one's context and navigating relationships with different actors. *CDKN and UNAM*

Another key takeaway was the need to avoid rigid, "bullet-proof" plans. Flexibility and openness were essential, especially when learning from stakeholders whose contextual knowledge could illuminate better paths forward. For example, during a late 2021 workshop focused on decentralising climate issues, a participant highlighted an existing village-level platform that could be leveraged – an insight that had not surfaced in earlier discussions. Notably, this workshop also included a representative from the National Planning Commission responsible for decentralisation, whom the team had not previously engaged, despite their critical role. This underscored the importance of remaining open to new actors and perspectives throughout the process.

The team also recognised the necessity of ongoing evaluation and capacity development. On several occasions, they had to pause and reassess – realising that without first strengthening stakeholders' understanding of climate science and change, subsequent activities (such as the **vulnerability and risk assessment workshops**) would fall short. Sometimes, this meant postponing events when it became clear that government officials had not yet fully bought into the initiative. Instead, the team invested time in building understanding and securing genuine commitment. Waiting for the right conditions – such as a diverse group of stakeholders with aligned mindsets and realistic expectations – proved to be a critical strategy for ensuring impact.

❝

Don't be too rigid. Focus on removing barriers that are blocking action. Whether it's capacities, relationships, understanding, whether it is the boss who doesn't understand why the technocrat in his division has to engage – sometimes the boss is the problem. Then engage the boss. If you have to do it with dinner, do it with dinner. If you have to do one-on-one, do it. Study your stakeholders and know what works, and use that. But be clear – I am doing this to remove this barrier. Or I am doing this to get this institutionalised."

– Margaret Angula, Namibia project lead

▲ Participant presenting results of stakeholder mapping exercise. *CDKN and UNAM*

KENYA

CASE STUDY

Repositioning efforts in response to changing government mandates in **Nairobi**

When CDKN began working on non-motorised transport (NMT) in Nairobi, their main counterpart was Nairobi City County (NCC), the agency then responsible for addressing transport issues. NCC's primary focus was road expansion to address congestion issues. To shift the narrative, CDKN aimed to raise awareness of the fact that nearly half of Nairobi's population walked or cycled, and that investing in NMT could deliver multiple benefits.

In conversation with NCC's transport team, CDKN explored which NMT themes they were most interested in. This led to the idea of organising a series of peer learning events with other developing country cities that were championing NMT. However, during the planning phase, a government restructuring transferred the transport mandate (and some technical staff) from NCC to the newly formed Nairobi Metropolitan Services (NMS).

▲ Cyclist on Jogoo Road, Nairobi. *CDKN and Tribesman Pictures*

Within the first few months of its new mandate, NMS took visible steps to promote NMT in the central business district, such as repairing walkways and adding cycle lanes. It became clear that CDKN's strategy needed to shift: raising awareness was no longer the priority. CDKN therefore engaged NMS to understand how best to support their efforts. NMS identified a need to fill data gaps to better prioritise and address NMT-related challenges. In response, CDKN focused on **building a credible and robust evidence base** that NMS could use to expand NMT infrastructure and make transport systems more inclusive.

Adapting to shifting mandates required staying attuned to the political and institutional context and responding strategically. It also meant being flexible and willing to revise the value proposition, even if that meant abandoning well-developed plans, such as the peer learning events, which were no longer relevant given NMS's proactive stance on NMT. Finally, it was essential to build new relationships with NMS leadership, while remaining sensitive to the political dynamics between the former and current transport authorities.

▲ Commuters in Nairobi use a mix of motorised and non-motorised transport to reach their work places. *CDKN and Tribesman Pictures*

ETHIOPIA

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1 Working with Ethiopia's Ministry of Finance opened doors to other sectors and provided a stable partner with strong operating systems and institutional memory.

2 Navigating shifting institutional mandates is enabled by a solid base of trust, built through joint ownership of initiatives from the outset and supported by multiple strategies to help government partners advance their agenda.

CASE STUDY

Using the right government entry point for advancing climate change and gender integration in **Ethiopia**

Over more than a decade of working on advancing the climate change agenda in Ethiopia, the CDKN team has navigated multiple changes in government focal points responsible for the country's climate portfolio. As institutional mandates have evolved, the team reassessed partnerships and aligned with the appropriate institutions – particularly in relation to the chairing and secretariat functions of the **gender and climate change community of practice** (CoP).

Prior to the establishment of the Ministry of Finance's Climate Fund (the Climate Resilient Green Economy (CRGE) facility), Ethiopia's Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) oversaw the climate portfolio. However, it struggled to convene other sectors effectively. The creation of the Climate Fund, along with the recruitment of technical staff, opened new avenues for developing climate-focused joint programmes and projects that extended beyond individual sectoral priorities. Although the CRGE facility was officially mandated to oversee the financial coordination of climate issues, the Ministry of Finance's strong track record in fund administration and its operational competencies (such as auditing and reporting) positioned it as a stable and accountable partner – and a de-facto coordinator of climate issues. When the gender and climate change CoP was formed, the CRGE facility was appointed as its secretariat.

▲ Participants of the gender and climate change training of trainers workshop. *CDKN*

In 2023, the Ministry of Planning and Development (MOPD) was appointed to take over the technical coordination of climate change issues, establishing a dedicated unit that transitioned from the EPA. Given MOPD's mandate to review and approve sectoral plans and lead national planning processes, it was considered the most influential institution to drive the mainstreaming of gender and social inclusion considerations across sectors. Consequently, the chairing of the community of practice was transferred, requiring the CDKN team to build new relationships with MOPD officers.

During this transition, the Ministry of Finance played a dual role – as both a gate and gatekeeper – facilitating a smooth handover while its gender focal person moved to the new institution, continuing to champion cross-sectoral collaboration. This sustained support for the gender and climate change agenda, despite shifting mandates, stemmed from the co-owned nature of the issues **from the outset.** Initial gaps and needs were identified through a scoping exercise, laying the foundation for shared ownership. Ongoing support from the CDKN team, combined with capacity strengthening of sectoral partners and the development of technical materials and guidelines on gender mainstreaming, has helped maintain momentum despite institutional and staff turnover.

▲ Participants of the gender and climate change training of trainers workshop. *CDKN*

Endnotes

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Ladakh reflection. *Indi Tourists via Flickr CC-BY-NC*
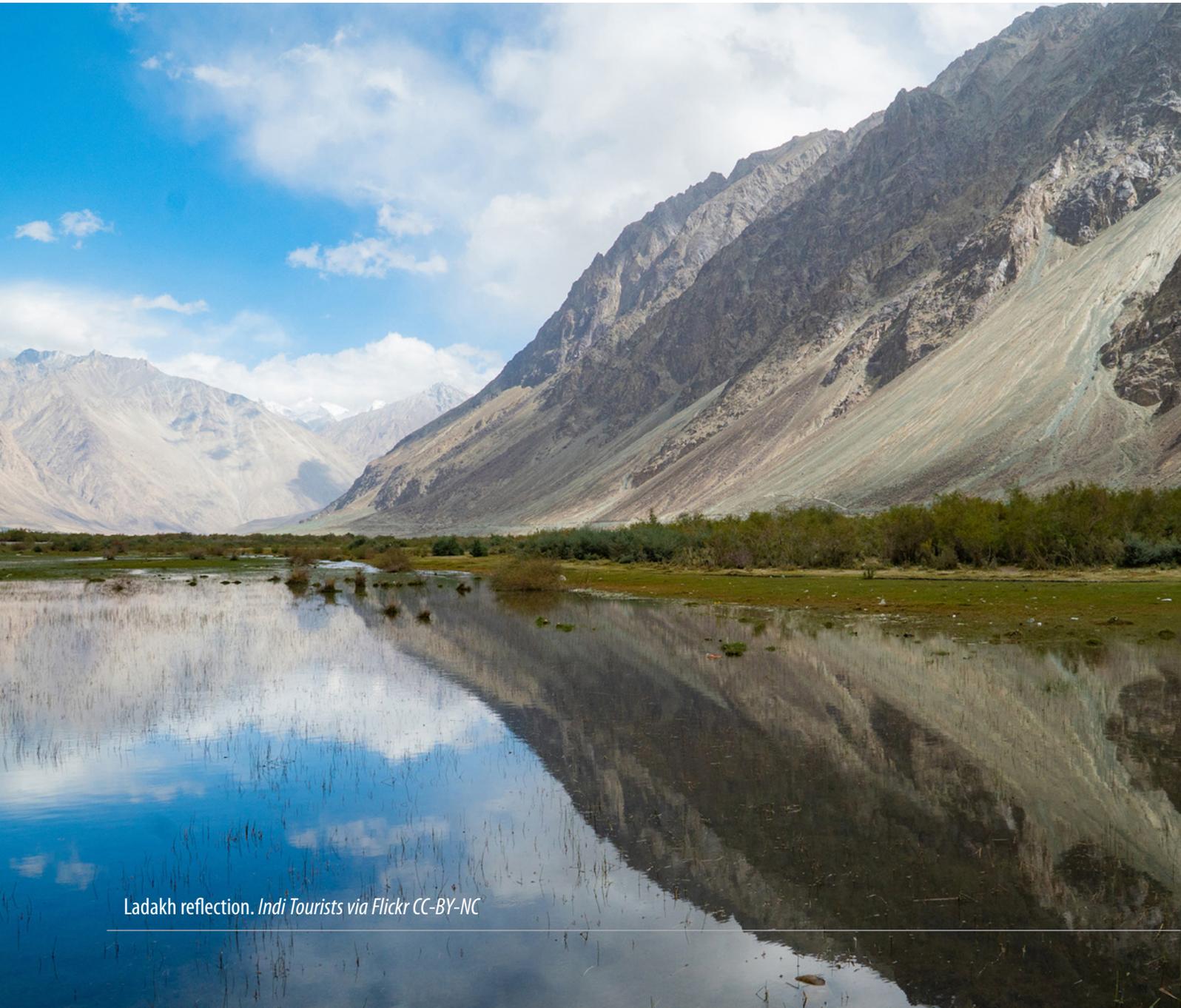
THIS SERIES IS STRUCTURED AS FOLLOWS:

CHALLENGE 1   Key stakeholders lack sufficient information about the significance and urgency of climate change

CHALLENGE 2   Climate change is not sufficiently high on political agendas or part of institutional mandates

CHALLENGE 3   Climate change is mainly seen as an environmental responsibility, with little cross-sector collaboration

CHALLENGE 4   Subnational actors lack guidance and support to implement climate change frameworks set at the national level

CHALLENGE 5   Limited capacities and resource allocation prevent climate change integration and implementation

CHALLENGE 6   When gatekeeping and bureaucracy become obstacles to project progress

CHALLENGE 7   Limited support hinders climate integration at the community level

ABOUT CDKN

The Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN) works to improve the well-being of the most climate-affected people in the global South, especially marginalised groups, through transformative climate action. CDKN is managed by SouthSouthNorth, in partnership with Fundación Futuro Latinoamericano (FFLA) and ICLEI South Asia, and co-funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

We work in partnership with public, civil society and private sectors to mobilise knowledge, leadership and capacity in the global South in support of locally-owned and -led climate action.

Please visit: www.cdkn.org

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