

ISAAA AFRICENTER

PRODUCTS AND SERVICES 2021



ISAAA AfriCenter

ISAAA AfriCenter has the Africa mandate in sharing knowledge on biosciences through strategic communications and outreach for informed policy and choice. Over the years, the gap between science and society has stifled the speed in which research outputs are transitioned into useful products for the people. In the African context, misinformation, aggressive activism, unfavourable policies and regulations, have seen the continent lag behind in adopting bioscience innovations.

Against this backdrop, ISAAA AfriCenter was instituted to facilitate information sharing and constructive dialogue between stakeholders. To achieve this, the Center implements five key programs;

- Communication and knowledge sharing
- Capacity building
- Policy engagement
- Media engagement
- Strategic partnerships

These has had a profound impact in building understanding that has shaped positive perception on application of bioscience innovations as solutions to intractable societal challenges. As we transition into BioTrust Consortium, AfriCenter will offer their signature support services and products on competitive basis.



A

Science Communication Training: Translating Research for a Lay Audience

The Situation

The changing dynamics of research and ever-increasing societal demands for understanding research implications has ignited a strong need for scientists to acquire effective communication skills for engaging a wide spectrum of actors. There exists a communication gap between scientists and stakeholders (end users of research findings), thus slowing down adoption of valuable innovations and acceptance of research results.

Science communication is a practice that aims to help the lay-public understand research results or the scientific process. We are a leading organisation with vast experience in training scientists on how to effectively communicate their research. Our world-class experts empower scientists with the skills needed to transform them into communicators that can effectively engage a non-technical audience.

Benefits

Our trainees have participated in media interviews that have had a positive impression, built their social media profiles enough to become influencers in their own right and developed policy briefs that have informed policy and programmatic action. Here is what one had to say after the training:



I am writing to express my gratitude on the science communication training workshop. It was timely and very enlightening. I have since held two major interviews with film crews from National Geographic and Czech Republic who were interested in coverage of the conservancy's community conservation education program. After the training, preparing for the interviews was very easy - knowledge of key messages, choice of words, how to behave in front of the camera and responding to sensitive topics like poaching. I have no idea how it would have been if it weren't for the training. I utilized most if not all of the techniques I learnt during the workshop. I am indeed grateful. Thank you ISAAA staff!

Mercy Waithira, a Conservationist at Ol Pejeta Conservancy

For more information, visit www.africenter.com/courses

B

Stakeholder Netmapping Training Course

The Situation

Are you a researcher, policy maker or community-based leader struggling to understand who and how the actors within your complex operating environment determine your developmental/intervention outcome? Do you know how the different actors are connected, relative to your desired outcome? How do you develop an effective stakeholder engagement strategy with minimal resources?

Stakeholder Netmapping helps researchers and project managers understand, visualize and improve situations in which many different actors influence a desired outcome. More specifically, the tool enables managers to determine which actors are involved in a given network, how they are linked, how influential they are, and what their goals are.

Benefits

The Net-Map tool successfully unlocks various stalemates/conflicts in systems, organisations and projects. The Netmapping process is particularly important because it helps in; defining how stakeholders are connected, identifying influencers of a decision or action, setting of priorities and strategies, defining coalitions/conflicting goals and picking out where efforts and/or resources are best invested. By gathering in-depth information about governance networks, goals of actors, and their power and influence, the net-map allows for empirical breakdown of complex multi-stakeholder governance, hence attainment of your milestone.



An ISAAA AfriCenter-led net-mapping exercise



Net-mapping skills I gained from the ISAAA training will be very useful when identifying stakeholders to engage as I translate my research into products.

Wameotsile Mahabile, Researcher at Botswana Society of Animal Science.



The Annual OFAB Kenya Media Awards Event



The Situation

Under-reporting, publishing of misinformation and disinformation about agricultural biotechnology has greatly undermined appreciation of the technology and its potential for national development. This has contributed to misconceptions and unfounded resistance of the technology, slowing adoption, with a huge opportunity cost to farmers and consumers.

The annual OFAB Kenya Media award celebrates exemplary journalism that exhibits best practices in credible science reporting. The award recognizes the critical roles played by the media in promoting constructive dialogue on modern biotechnology through responsible, professional, ethical and effective reporting. In the era of systemic post-truth and fake news, the award has stimulated a shift in credible media reporting.

Benefits

By supporting the award, you contribute directly to building a media environment that provides the public with credible and factual information on transformative science, technology and innovations. It is also an opportunity for premium brand visibility of the award partners.

In Kenya, OMAs is primarily hosted by ISAAA AfriCenter in collaboration with the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). Partners in the public and private sector, as well as like-minded civil society organizations can collaborate in the annual award



OFAB Kenya media award is a remarkable way of encouraging more journalists to report on agricultural biotechnology. It is an honour to have been feted overall winner in the competition.

Leopold Obi, Nation Media Group. Winner, 2020 OFAB Journalist of the Year.

D

African Short Course on Agro-biosciences (AfSCA)

The Situation

New and emerging technologies are advancing at a faster rate than the public can understand and apply them in daily life. Complexity of the involved science disciplines, partners and interests also pose a challenge in developing policies to govern use of these technologies.

The Africa Short Course on Agro-biosciences (AfSCA) is a regional training program hosted by ISAAA AfriCenter, focusing on emerging bioscience technologies with potential application in agricultural transformation. The course offers a platform for diverse stakeholders to dialogue on appropriate use of agro-bioscience innovations.

Topics addressed under AfSCA

- a. Modern biotechnology
- b. Genome editing
- c. Synthetic biology
- d. Gene drives
- e. Drones and robotics for agriculture
- f. Digital sequence information (DSI)
- g. International negotiations under the Convention on Biological Diversity

Who can sign up

- a. Research scientists
- b. Early career professionals and entrepreneurial groups
- c. Special interest groups
- d. Regional entities and people with an interest in biosciences

Benefits

- (i) Updates on global trends on emerging bioscience technologies
- (ii) Networking opportunities with the experts in the various fields
- (iii) Strengthened capacity to inform policy



I always thought that international negotiations are the responsibility of governments and lawyers. I learnt today that I can also make a contribution in drafting international guidelines that eventually affect our country policies on research and development

Duncan Njora, Participant of AfSCA 2020 Youth Edition

E

The Drumbeat: Africa Bioscience Trends

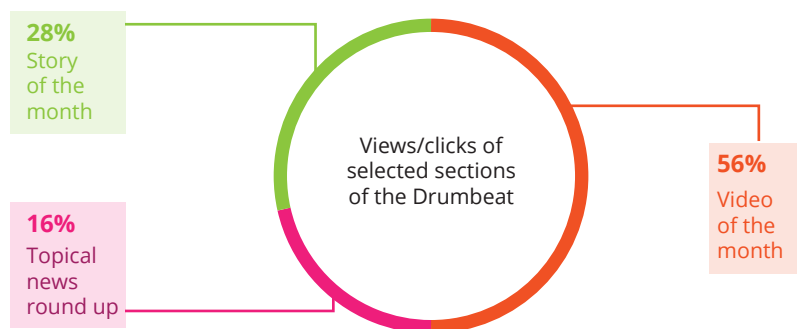


The Situation

In Africa, science often takes a backseat in policy formulation and implementation. There are limited platforms that amplify bioscience development on the continent, making it difficult for this agenda to attract the attention of policy makers. Lack of a regular source of factual bioscience news updates from around Africa also contributes to this challenge.

The DrumBeat, an e-newsletter that tells African bioscience stories, aims to bridge this gap. The monthly e-newsletter brings absorbing stories on Africa's latest bioscience development and cutting-edge scientific innovations, as well as expert views and recommendations on optimizing science and technology to steer the continent forward.

The newsletter has gained popularity in the region and across the globe, with over 4,000 subscribers comprising policy makers, media, development partners, scientists and academia.



Benefits

When you become part of the DrumBeat, you become part of success. Our partnership is an opportunity for our team to exclusively feature your organization's programs and highlight your achievements. The DrumBeat will amplify your project's key findings and the recommendations may attract the attention of policy makers for action. By telling your story in the DrumBeat, you will have your work boosted and your effort recognized and rewarded.



The DrumBeat has brought Africa's biotechnology progress from oblivion to limelight and it has created confidence in the adoption of agricultural biotechnology in the continent

Dr. Rufus Ebegba Director-General/CEO, National Biosafety Management Agency, Nigeria.

To catch up on some DrumBeat issues, visit www.africenter.isaaa.org/the-drumbeat

F

Science Cafés

The Situation

The gap between science and society has grown over the years due to a weakening trust bond between scientists, media and the general public. The public has a misconception about what research scientists do and why. This mistrust has fuelled misinformation and disinformation not only among the public but also key stakeholders who set the policy agenda. This has resulted in numerous policy and regulatory bottlenecks across the continent. The weak link between researchers and the media has amplified mistrust with science sceptics using this as an opportunity to spread misinformation.

Science café' is a regular informal interaction session between scientists/researchers and journalists meant to foster close working relations and build capacity for improved and factual reporting.

Benefits

The aim of these sessions is to provide project researchers with an opportunity to share the benefits and opportunities of their research work and the intended societal impact to the public through media coverage.

Science café' also provides an opportunity for pairing research scientists and journalists. This helps in limiting misinformation or misrepresentation of facts to the public by the journalists and by extension the media.

A well-informed media deciphers misinformation and shields the public from consuming propaganda meant to derail them from benefits of technological advancement.



I would like to thank ISAAA for organizing this session. We look forward to more collaborations, partnerships, and support in ensuring that the Cotton Value Chain integrates with other sectors of the economy to attract investments, industrialize the nation of Kenya, create more jobs, and enhance export earnings.

Hon. Betty Maina, CBS Cabinet Secretary Ministry of Industrialization, Trade and Enterprise Development.





Africa Biennial Biosciences Communication (ABBC) Symposium

The Situation

Advances in bioscience innovations is key to fast-tracking Africa's development and transformation process. The continent's chance to benefit from these technologies lies heavily on its ability to efficiently develop, regulate and communicate their potential and risks. However, perceptions about any form of induced genetic variations are highly influenced by the continuing emotion-based GMO-food debate. Thus, the need for Africa to adopt appropriate communication approaches that will facilitate uptake.

Why ABBC?

The Africa Biennial Biosciences Communication (ABBC) symposium is a platform for biosciences stakeholders to constructively exchange experiences and best practices towards improving biosciences communications. The ABBC symposium aims at providing an Africa-based and African-led platform to interrogate best communication practices that will facilitate informed decision-making on bioscience innovations in the region.

Who can sign up?

- Scientists
- Science communicators
- Policy and decision makers
- Media practitioners
- Technology developers and industry players
- Regulators
- Professional associations representing various end-users including farmers

Benefits

Organizations and individuals participating in ABBC symposium get an opportunity to share, learn and network with our diverse pool of stakeholders in biosciences. The platform also offers special sessions for select stakeholders to interrogate and address key issues such as; policy overlaps, regulatory bottlenecks and misinformation on bioscience innovations.



During the Symposium (ABBC2017), I gathered different experiences from all over the world, highlighting how communicators tackle and navigate the challenges of communicating biosafety. From the presentations, I appreciated why communicators like me shouldn't miss such opportunities, as well as why we need to stay on top of issues, if the public is to get factual information on agri-biotech and biosafety.

Alex Abutu, Journalist, Nigeria

For more information, visit www.abbcSYMPOSIUM.org

H

Theory of Change (ToC): A Participatory Tool for Monitoring and Evaluation

The Situation

Monitoring and Evaluation forms an integral part of programme management, reporting and mechanism of accountability in organisations. It is good practice to build M&E into the programme design from the onset. As an organisation;

- What is the most appropriate tool you could use to gather data to measure success?
- How will you track on the progress and for what purpose?
- How will the data be presented/communicated and for what purpose?

M&E is the process by which data are collected and analysed in order to provide information to your stakeholders for use in program planning and project management. Traditional approaches of M&E measure outcomes and require them to be known (or hypothesised) at the start and baseline measures to be in place. However, many initiatives and projects may have outcomes that are not known at the start, or that are very hard to define. Theory of change enables a portfolio of data to be collected that might represent a more complex outcome.

Theory of change is an ongoing process of reflection to explore change and how it happens. By using a theory of change approach, we can articulate how we expect outcomes to be achieved. We do this by exploring the real-world setting in which the project is being implemented.

Benefits

This short course will enable you to;

- Get an understanding of what it means to “manage for results” and to be “accountable”
- Run a more results-oriented programming process
- Collaborate with partners based on comparative advantage to bring about desired impact

At the end of the training, your managers and staff will be able to track the programme's efficiency and effectiveness covering; reporting to donors, building a case for programme efficacy and impact, being accountable to stakeholders, and motivation for continued or new funding from other donors.

“The theory of Change breaks down seemingly complex processes and provides clarity of what needs to be done by who, and when while considering change and offering adjustments in order to achieve the overall project goal

Prof. Steven Runo, Kenyatta University.

Communication Support Services

The Situation

Africa has invested in research that has yielded interesting and impactful innovations with the potential to solve most of the continent's biting agricultural challenges. Unfortunately, most of these findings and innovations have ended within the confines of the labs and journals. Low public engagement and inappropriate packaging of bioscience information has immensely contributed to lack of buy-in and value for investment in research.

What does our Communication Support entail?

ISAAA AfriCenter has carved out a niche in providing communication support services for science projects to effectively communicate and engage stakeholders in the research process. This entails development of a communication strategy, stakeholder-mapping, media engagement and coordinating seeing-is-believing study tours. We also develop high-impact short videos, photography and simplified communication materials that include; policy briefs, frequently asked questions (FAQs), infographics, a series of project Top Ten Facts and special reports.

Documenting the project helps in unpacking technical science jargon into simple language that ensures end-users (the public) make meaning out of the research. Short videos capturing product development from the laboratory to the field is one of the most effective ways to present an accurate view of science to the society.

Benefits

The following are key benefits from our communication support services:

1. Increased and balanced reporting of research projects as a result of scientist-journalist pairing.
2. Systematic stakeholder engagement and effective communication of research output from the communication strategy.
3. Improved capacity in pitching your project to potential partners and users. Effective project communication increases chances of your research products being adopted and helps in impacting policy.
4. Enhanced public understanding and appreciation of the research project as a result of impactful short videos, infographics and FAQs that unpack complex science into simple language. This, ultimately, builds public confidence and project buy-in.

In the entire road to commercialization of Bt-Cotton, ISAAA AfriCenter was very instrumental in facilitating effective communication on the processes and imparting knowledge to the stakeholders. They organized local, regional and international study tours that helped to unlock the doors in many cases that eventually led to commercialization of Bt-Cotton.

Dr. Charles Waturu, Project Investigator, Bt cotton Project, Kenya.

How to participate:

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