**Climate Change Awareness in Asia: An Assessment of the Climate Asia
Blog (<http://climateasiablog.wordpress.com/>)**

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Climate change refers to a significant and lasting change in the statistical distribution of weather patterns in terms of change in average weather conditions or in the distribution of weather around the average conditions over periods ranging from decades to millions of years. Global warming, which refers to the rise in the average temperature of Earth's atmosphere and oceans since the late 19th century, is one of the most visible impacts of climate change. Since the early 20th century, Earth's mean surface temperature has increased by about 0.8 °C (1.4 °F), with about two-thirds of the increase occurring since 1980. Scientists are more than 90% certain that this warming of the climate system is primarily caused by increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases produced by human activities such as the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation. Climate model projections summarized in the [2007 Fourth Assessment Report \(AR4\)](#) by the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) (IPCC) indicated that during the 21st century, the global surface temperature is likely to rise a further 1.1 to 2.9 °C (2 to 5.2 °F) for their lowest emissions scenario and 2.4 to 6.4 °C (4.3 to 11.5 °F) for their highest.

Media coverage of climate change helped shape the public opinion on this issue significantly throughout the last few decades, particularly in developed countries. However, the scenario is different in many developing countries, where the local media covers climate change poorly. As a consequence, the general public, particularly people in rural communities who are most vulnerable, lack a sound understanding of both the science and the policy implications of climate change. ([Kakonge](#), 2011).

Across the globe, many organizations and institutions have been studying the roles of media on climate change coverage and their impact on the lives of people on the ground. Some of these studies are aimed at exploring and utilizing new avenues and opportunities of media coverage on the climate change issue. [BBC Media Action](#), for instance, tries to connect to the vulnerable communities through utilizing their media and communication platforms so that even the poorest people can contribute to the cause and hold those in power accountable for their roles. Engaging people in debates and discussions is one of the central focuses of these programmes, enabling a healthy line of communication across political, ethnic, religious and other divides in society.

Among the projects that *BBC Media Action* is currently executing is [Climate Asia](#), a two year project that has been launched to provide the first comprehensive study into people's understandings of climate change across Asia. It focuses on the potential of media in supporting people affected by their changing environment. The project's aim is to understand the best ways to use media to provide people with the information they need to build resilience and take effective action on climate change. Supported by the UK's Department for International Development, *BBC Media Action* is implementing the project, targeting hard-to-reach communities who are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Working in seven countries – Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan and Vietnam – *Climate Asia* includes a survey of 25,000 people.

The research and communications services of *Climate Asia* project are made available at its [official blog](#). At first glance, the blog gives its readers the impression that it is a great resource for a researcher seeking information on its niche topics. Selection of a magazine-style smart WordPress theme and social media integration via Twitter and Facebook give it

an edge over amateur blogs in terms of look and feel. However, this positive first impression wanes over time when readers attempt to find certain information in the blog. There is no search option built in, neither are the articles arranged in any category or tab filters. Other than the monthly archive filter, a reader has no tool at his disposal to filter or sort information in the blog and find certain content. Moreover, from the time the blog was launched on June 18, 2012 until the time of this writing in March 2013, only eight articles have been uploaded, of which one contains the introductory notes of the blog.

Nevertheless, the reader will find a handful of resources about climate change and its impacts on Asia, contributed by experts and practitioners in the field of climate change in Asia. For instance, Rebecca McNaught and Ansherina Grace Talavera (2012) explain how practical participatory tools such as seasonal calendars can be adapted and used to develop shared knowledge of a changing climate in an article entitled “[Changing tools in a changing climate: experiences from the Philippines](#).” Professor Kees Stigter and Yunita T. Winarto (2012) discuss the benefits of a bottom-up approach to active agrometeorological learning among farmers in Indonesia in the article, “[Approaches to active learning for farmers on the consequences of climate change in Indonesian rice fields](#).” In the article, “[Communicating climate change risks for adaptation in coastal and delta communities in Vietnam](#),” Bach Tan Sinh (2012) of the National Institute for Science and Technology Policy and Strategy Studies, Ministry of Science and Technology of Vietnam, discusses the importance of understanding different audiences for climate change communications in Vietnam. Additionally, the articles contain links to other external websites and blogs for further information about the topics under discussion.

The most informative article available in the blog is entitled “[Download Climate Asia Initial Research Insights](#),” where the initial insights from the qualitative research of the *Climate Asia* project have been uploaded. The initial findings from Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal and Pakistan are already available for download in separate PDF files, whereas, the findings from Vietnam and China are expected to be available at a later date.

Among the five reports released, we took the [report on Bangladesh](#) as a sample for an overview of the report contents. The report covers *BBC Media Action*’s initial findings from 20 in-depth interviews and 16 focus groups in Bangladesh. The in-depth interviews were conducted with key experts and opinion-formers from central and local government, the media, the private sector, civil society, science and academia. These interviews explored knowledge and public understanding of climate change, responses to its impact and existing and potential communication channels relating to climate change. Locations for focus groups were chosen to represent different geographic zones in each country. In each location, focus group participants were recruited by age, gender, occupation and social class to capture a diversity of views within the population.

Based on the initial insights, focus group participants reported changes in seasons, extreme temperatures and rainfall all over the country, and many participants, experts and opinion-formers believed extreme weather events such as cyclones and floods had become more frequent. These changes were seen to have had negative impact on people’s daily lives such as increasing the risk of disease, affecting harvest yields and contributing to rural-urban worker migration owing to the salinity, river erosion and extreme rainfall that had occurred in rural areas. There was a general consensus that these changes had a negative impact on incomes, food production, water quality and human health, and that poor people and women from the south of the country were most vulnerable to these changes. Although many focus

group participants acknowledged government initiatives to manage the impact of climate change, few believed there was much that they could do to protect themselves. Television and radio were people's preferred media channels for learning more about these issues, alongside local face-to-face communication. Generally, focus group participants wanted information on climate change and what they could do to respond to it.

Based on insights gained from this qualitative survey, the project team would design a quantitative survey reaching 33,000 respondents across Asia. The aim of this research is to inform communication, enabling people to respond to changes in climate. A series of reports, communications strategies and interactive online tools would be available in 2013.

In conclusion, the contents of the *Climate Asia* blog are maturing hand-in-hand with the overall progress of the project. As of now, the blog does not contain much information for serious researchers mainly because of the fact that quantitative surveys are yet to be conducted. However, the *Climate Asia* blog still has a lot of potential to become a good reference point for researchers provided that the in-depth final reports are uploaded with detailed facts and figures in the future.

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BBC Media Action: http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/what_we_do/governance_and_rights

Climate Asia: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/where we work/asia/climateasia.html](http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/where_we_work/asia/climateasia.html)

Download Climate Asia Initial Research Insights:

<http://climateasiablog.wordpress.com/2012/10/23/download-climate-asia-initial-qualitative-research-findings/>

Report on Bangladesh: <http://climateasiablog.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/climate-asia-preliminary-qualitative-research-insights-bangladesh-october-2012.pdf>

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