

From field research to policy engagement: Enhancing parliamentary involvement in climate action

Introduction

Creating policy impact through research and policy interface is one of the key objectives of PRISE. PRISE's policy-first approach ensures that policy makers are at the forefront of our engagement activities so that they are not only involved throughout the research process but are also there to provide feedback and promote research uptake. This goal has seen PRISE researchers invest in building and cultivating long-term, continuous relationships with stakeholders; re-adjusting our engagement and communication approaches to promote research uptake; and building the capacity of stakeholders to interpret and translate research results for policy implementation.

This story of change highlights how SDPI changed its approach to stakeholder engagement and communication that led to the identification and promotion of key stakeholders as champions of policy-to-action for PRISE research in Pakistan. Through these champions, PRISE research has been highlighted at the [Sustainable Development Conference](#) (Islamabad), 3rd Science-Policy Conference on Climate Change (Islamabad), as well as in meetings of the Standing Committee on Climate Change and meetings of the World Commission on forced displacement¹. Today, PRISE research is well-recognised among stakeholders in the policy-making arena. As a result, members of the PRISE team are regularly invited to consultative meetings on climate issues to provide feedback. An additional example is Dr. Mohsin Iqbal, currently working on the IPCC's special report on arid regions, who has requested that the PRISE team share all its PRISE research on Pakistan, for use in the report as there is limited research on semi-arid regions of Pakistan².

A brief overview of the climate change policymaking landscape in Pakistan

It is imperative to assess the policy landscape in order to strategically contribute to policy impact. Political economy plays a huge role in determining the uptake and implementation of research messages in Pakistan, which is why government agencies were kept at the fore-front of SDPI's engagement activities. A brief overview of the climate change policy making structure at the Federal level is given below:

1. *Ministry of Climate Change*: Climate change was not a major political subject in Pakistan before the Ministry of Climate Change (MoCC) was reinstated in January 2015. The Federal Government established a Ministry dedicated to deal with climate change in 2012, which was then downgraded to a Division in 2013, thus barring it from making high-level decisions. Moreover, while the MoCC became fully functional in January 2015, the position for the Federal Minister for Climate Change remained vacant for 11 months. Hence, climate change policymaking in Pakistan has been volatile and inconsistent in the last few years.
2. *Climate change budget*: The federal Climate change budget is another weak area that hinders climate action in Pakistan. Approximately 6% of Pakistan's federal budget during 2010–2014

¹ Outcome Monitoring form, Parliamentarians, P1, 9/19/2017

² Outcome Monitoring form, Government agencies, P3, 12/12/2017

comprised climate change-related spending, whereas the country's adaptation needs have been identified to range between \$7 billion to \$14 billion per year.³ Even for the current fiscal year (2017-2018), the government allocated Rs. 815 million (approx. \$0.74 million – which makes around 0.04% of the annual budget for social sector) for climate change.⁴ Most of this budget goes towards ongoing projects on mitigation, whereas adaptation-related projects are not reflected in current expenditures.

3. *Representation in the National Assembly (Pakistan's sovereign legislative body):* At the National Assembly-level, there is an official Standing Committee on Climate Change, which has legislative power and deals with pressing policy issues of climate change. It also has the power to summon key officials at the Ministry of Climate Change and other relevant organisations, to brief the committee on the activities/progress and other issues under consideration.

On the path towards effective stakeholder engagement: the journey of PRISE in Pakistan

In 2015, SDPI joined hands with elected officials at the [newly reinstated Ministry of Climate Change](#) to focus on key climate issues facing Pakistan. With renewed interest in national climate issues, Ministry officials actively participated in PRISE events and requested that the PRISE team collate evidence on key climate vulnerabilities facing the country. This served as an opportunity for SDPI to develop long-term partnerships with key stakeholders.

PRISE researchers at SDPI produced a [Country Situation Assessment](#) (CSA) report in 2015 for stakeholders at the MoCC, which provided them with a thorough assessment of how climate change undermines development efforts at the national level through sector-specific impacts, and highlighted important issues related to how a lack of preparedness towards climate change may entrench Pakistan deeper into poverty. This report was the first ever policy review since the Ministry was reinstated and was well received in the stakeholder community. Demand⁵ for the creation of more robust evidence on sector specific impacts was generated as a result. However, both policymakers and researchers felt that there was a lack of evidence on sector-specific climate risks, vulnerabilities and adaptation. While the PRISE team engaged policymakers through events such as seminars and personalised one-on-one meetings to discuss issues highlighted in the CSA, some policymakers soon lost interest due to the lack of new evidence on key sectors, as most of the discussions that took place at various policymaking fora were sector and issue specific. Policymakers were demanding timely policy-relevant research.

Responding directly to stakeholder demand in an iterative manner, the SDPI team approached key government officials to identify which priority policy research areas they believed were most pressing for Pakistan. Three priority research areas were identified through Focus Group Discussions with key stakeholders in the MoCC and the Ministry of Planning, Development and Reforms: migration; cotton value chain and water governance. This feedback from stakeholders allowed SDPI to become more strategic in its engagement and to target specific sectors or processes/policy areas that new research activities should focus on.

During these three research projects (Projects 1, 3 and 7), the focus of our engagement was with district-level government officials as they were our primary source for local level data. However,

³ ADB. 2017. Climate Change Profile of Pakistan

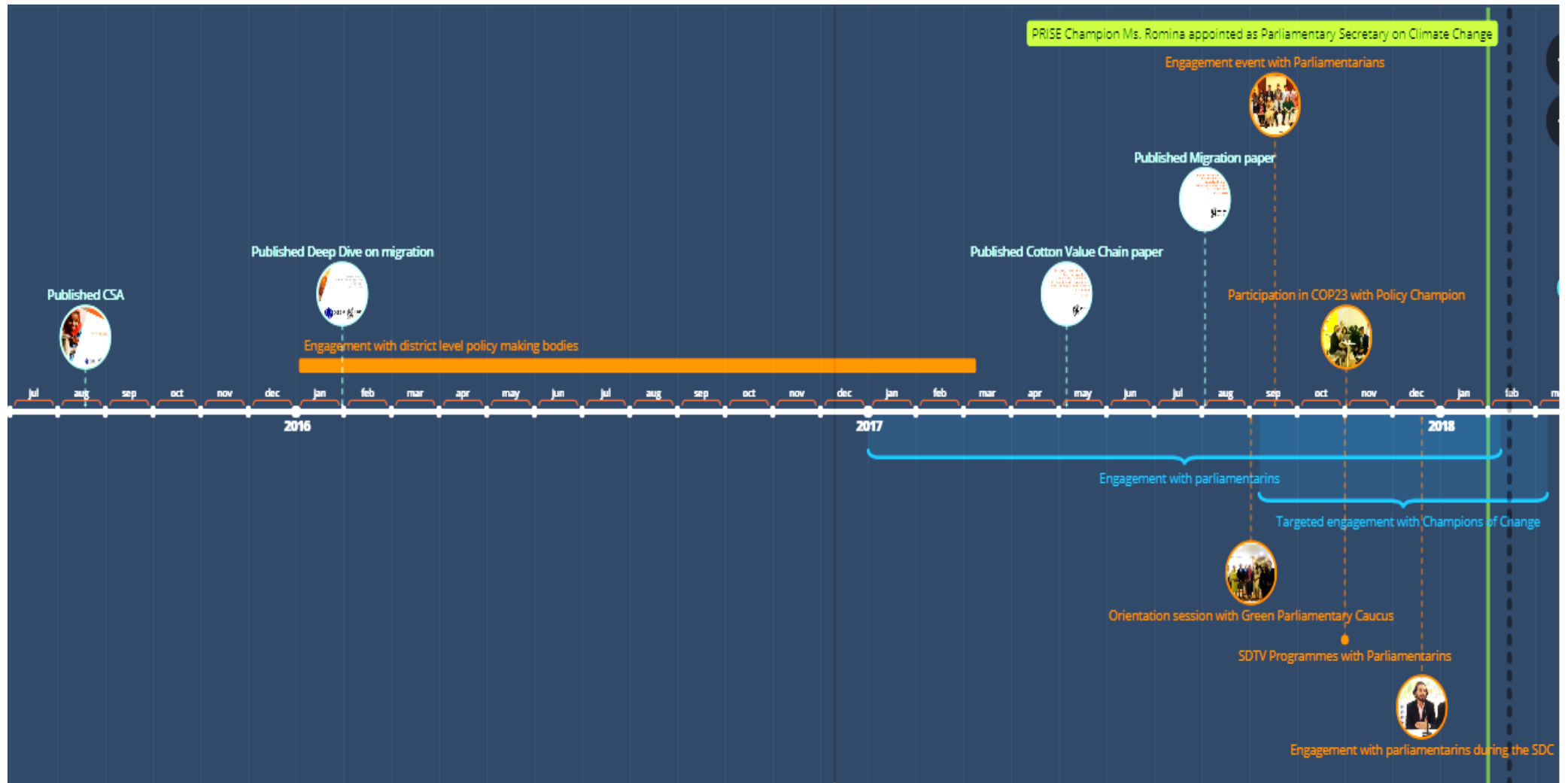
⁴ Ministry of Finance. 2017. Budget in brief (2017-2018). <http://www.finance.gov.pk/budget/Budget%20in%20Brief%202017-18.pdf>

⁵ This report was downloaded 947 times from PRISE and SDPI's webpage collectively.

federal level officials were also kept updated of the latest developments in our research through informal meetings, as these officials were involved in policymaking processes at federal level. As soon as our initial findings emerged, SDPI contacted federal-level government officials to initiate discussions about the implementation conditions and frameworks needed to translate our evidence into policy/action.

During this process of engagement with stakeholders, PRISE researchers identified some parliamentarians who have the potential to act as ‘champions’ to carry and disseminate the evidence and messages emerging from our research. These are actors who are not only part of various influential high-level political fora, but also those individuals who we believed can help to voice our policy messages due to their interest in climate change issues. This process of targeting ‘champions’ was an important part of the PRISE approach of evaluating, refining and re-evaluating stakeholder engagement processes as it enabled SDPI to include key stakeholders into our stakeholder engagement strategy and stakeholder mapping approach, and lead to the creation of a network of ‘champions’ that we can collaborate with to support Research into Use. As a step forward, these champions will help promote the legacy of PRISE beyond the life of the project. SDPI will continue to provide research support to these parliamentarians on crucial policy issues.

Figure: Timeline of SDPI's engagement with key stakeholders



Engagement with Parliamentarians: turning a challenge into an opportunity

It was during the research phase that the SDPI team realised the need to engage with policy implementers who can take up the research messages coming out of the three projects. As the PRISE team had no prior engagement with policy makers it was a major challenge for the SDPI team to start engaging with parliamentarians, especially as this came at a time when the project was halfway through its duration. Nevertheless, this also served as an opportunity to build our engagement through the use of research-based evidence. The SDPI team started to organise personalised meetings with Parliamentarians (champions and other parliamentarians) to share the research findings and policy messages. Two major issues came to the fore that could hamper the uptake of PRISE policy messages:

1. Initial engagement with the Parliamentarians showed huge knowledge gaps on the subject of climate change.
2. This called for increased interaction with the Parliamentarians, not only to share findings but also for capacity building, which also brought with it financial implications.

However, SDPI took this challenge and turned it into an opportunity: While the team was devising a capacity-building plan, the Heinrich Boll Stiftung (HBS, Pakistan), a German foundation and part of the Green political movement that has developed worldwide, became aware of our increased interaction with Parliamentarians and approached SDPI with an interest in collaborating to sensitise Parliamentarians on key climate issues and reinvigorating the Green Parliamentarians Caucus⁶ [a networking forum to equip Parliamentarians with the necessary information and capacity, and enable them to spearhead environment-friendly policy changes]. With additional resources at hand, a targeted strategy for engaging parliamentarians was devised. A select number of Parliamentarians were invited for Coffee Table programmes^{7,8,9} (September - November 2017) to assess their knowledge about climate issues. This helped the SDPI team draft and refine its capacity building manual for Parliamentarians.



A screenshot of PRISE team lead Pakistan Dr. Abid Suleri's tweet after the engagement event with parliamentarians.

⁶ Outcome Monitoring form, Parliamentarians, no specific project, 5/12/2017

⁷ <http://sdpi.tv/show.php?cat=talkshow&id=916>

⁸ <http://sdpi.tv/show.php?cat=talkshow&id=917>

⁹ <http://sdpi.tv/show.php?cat=talkshow&id=920>



A screenshot of Mr. Uzair (Chair, Standing Committee on climate change)'s tweet during COP23.

PRISE supporting Parliamentarians to build capacity

As a result, the chair of the Green Parliamentarians Caucus, Uzair Malik, Member National Assembly and Chair Climate Change Committee, invited the SDPI-PRISE team to an [awareness-raising event \(held on October 23rd, in Islamabad\)](#). At the event, the PRISE team lead in Pakistan, Dr. Abid Suleri, delivered a presentation in the Urdu language, which focused on basic information about climate change and what it means for Pakistan. The PRISE team took the highly unusual step of presenting this information in Urdu (and not in English) as

parliamentarians come from different regions of Pakistan, where the official working language is Urdu. This strategy was part of our targeted engagement framework for parliamentarians, which proved to be highly successful. Dr. Abid Suleri also highlighted how Parliamentarians can help to promote climate-resilient economic development, which led to a lively debate among the participants. A key feature of this event was the high attendance and participation of female Parliamentarians (8 female and 2 male parliamentarians attended the event). Being a representative of the most vulnerable group to climate change, women parliamentarians are more likely to take forward a gender-sensitive climate agenda.

The SDPI team timed this awareness-raising session to take place a day before the first meeting of the

Standing Committee of Climate Change (which took place on 20th October 2018). The first meeting of the committee was very successful, not least because many of the Parliamentarians who attended it voiced their opinions on climate change for the first time after attending the awareness-raising event that had been organised by PRISE the day before. The first meeting of the committee event also resulted in increased demand for our research by Parliamentarians and resulted in an increase in the number of requests for meetings with PRISE researchers¹⁰.



PRISE Champion's reflections on how PRISE has built their capacities

SDPI's research, particularly through PRISE, has been an invaluable asset in helping us discuss and deliberate knowledge-based policy interventions, as well as in identifying and communicating Pakistan's migration and water challenges effectively in international policy circles.

- Mr. Malik Uzair, Chair, Standing Committee on Climate Change

¹⁰ SDPI's Outcome Monitoring report, September 2017

To capitalise on the momentum created by the first awareness-raising event, SDPI organised another engagement event (on 8th November 2018), which focused on the role of Parliamentarians and how they can help to bridge the research-policy gap. During this event, there were a large number of informal interactions between PRISE researchers and Parliamentarians, during which Parliamentarians requested researchers to draft talking points based on PRISE research, which policymakers could then share on national and international discussion fora.¹¹ PRISE thematic areas and findings were particularly highlighted by these Parliamentarians in different panels during the 20th Sustainable Development Conference (SDC – held from 5th to 7th December in Islamabad). Mr. Malik Uzair, Member of the National Assembly and Chair Standing Committee on Climate Change referred to [PRISE thematic areas - especially migration](#) - during his talk on Sustainable Development Goals at the SDC. Based on this strong partnership, Mr. Malik sought guidance and engaged pro-actively with the PRISE team lead in Pakistan, Dr. Abid Suleri, during COP23 in Bonn in December 2017.¹²



Participants of the second Parliamentarians event held on 8th November 2018. Image: SDPI

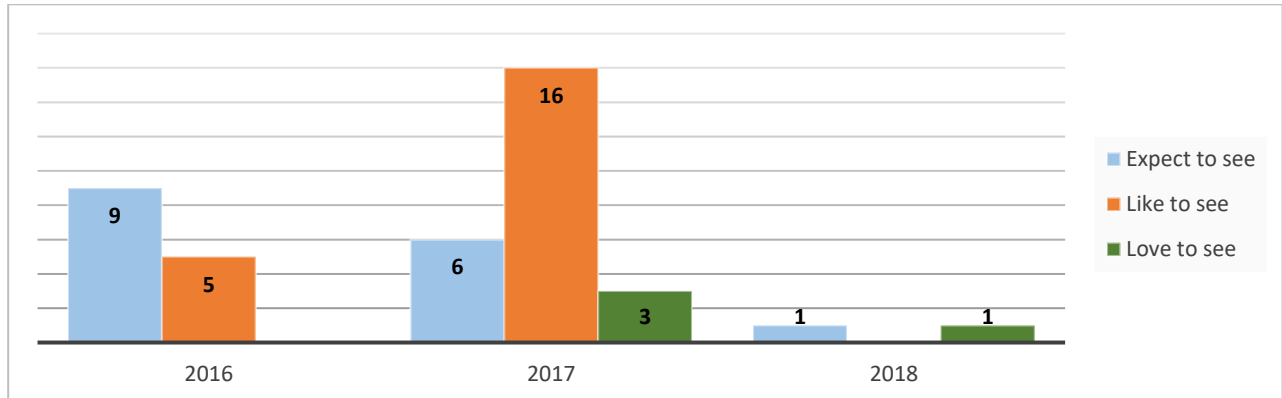
Understanding contributions towards impact: PRISE's use of Outcome Mapping

Our enhanced interaction with Parliamentarians, and success in engaging with them to create change, is supported by evidence from the PRISE Outcome Mapping (OM) system, which documents the progress SDPI has made in stakeholder engagement - not only in terms of quantity, but also quality. The figure below shows that SDPI had more 'like to see indicators' (including: organising sessions to discuss climate issues; requesting support from PRISE on drafting bills, laws, etc.; organising sessions to discuss climate issues) from Parliamentarians in 2017 as compared to 2016, which had more observations in the 'Expect to see' category (which includes engaging with researchers; participating in discussions and reflections on the research that reflects their knowledge of the issue). Our progress in targeted stakeholder engagement with these Parliamentarians is also illustrated by the inclusion of

¹¹ Outcome Monitoring form, Parliamentarians, P1, 9/19/2017; Outcome Monitoring form, Parliamentarians, no specific project, 12/12/2017; Outcome Monitoring form, elected officials, no specific project, P1, 12/12/2017

¹² <https://twitter.com/MMUzairK/status/930405908198363136>; <https://twitter.com/MMUzairK/status/930033480825737216>; <https://twitter.com/Abidsuleri/status/930125654980464640>

Progress Marker entries in the OM system in 2017 to 2018 from the ‘love to see’ category – including: participating in campaigns on climate resilience, including with a gender perspective; supporting/proposing positive legislation around climate change resilience, and vetoing problematic legislation.



As a result of our engagement, and more importantly our capacity building efforts, Ms. Romina Khurshid was recently appointed as Parliamentary Secretary for Climate Change in the National Assembly¹³. She publicly acknowledged the support and role of the SDPI team during the celebration of her new position at SDPI.

What made our engagement with Parliamentarians successful?

After initial engagement with Parliamentarians in 2017, the SDPI team soon realised that these stakeholders had strong potential to not only disseminate and promote our research findings, but also



PRISE Champion's reflections on how PRISE has built their capacities

Continuous interaction with SDPI and PRISE research team has allowed me to gain new and useful insights about climate change, its socio-economic impacts and policy action. PRISE is striving to generate implementable policy solutions for addressing key national climate adaptation issues. I will continue to be its ambassador and take forward these messages for the welfare of women and vulnerable people of this country.

- Ms. Romina Khurshid, Parliamentary Secretary of Climate Change

promote research uptake and informed, evidence-based policymaking. However, for this to become a reality, we knew that our engagement with them would require a more tailored approach. We decided to extend our stakeholder engagement approach to include the strategy of identifying and actively targeting climate change ‘Champions’, rather than employing a group-specific (i.e. parliamentarians in general) engagement strategy, which may have oversimplified the process of research uptake. As a first step, we identified two Parliamentarians as potential champions - it was our

¹³ Outcome Monitoring form, Parliamentarians, no specific project, 1/11/2018

stated goal to identify one female and one male parliamentarian:

1. Mr. Malik Muhammad Uzair Khan (Chair, Standing Committee on Climate Change) and;
2. Ms. Romina Khurshid (Parliamentary Secretary on Climate Change; Chair, Standing Committee on Textiles & Member of the Standing Committee on Climate Change).

SDPI organised special meetings with them to brief them about PRISE projects and findings, which led them to highlight our policy messages at different policymaking fora at the international, national and local level.

SDPI's linkages with key policymakers are stronger and more visible than ever. The Government of Pakistan, along with Parliamentarians, now invite and endorse SDPI's feedback on key climate-related policy issues. Strengthened working relations with key policymakers have allowed the PRISE team to voice its evidence based-policy solutions in high-level national and international fora. While policy change is a long-term process with little traceability to specific research outputs, the level of trust established between PRISE researchers and policy makers is indicative of PRISE making its mark in the policy arena of Pakistan.



SDPI team after a meeting with the Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on climate change issues in Islamabad (12 Feb 2018). From left to right: Amb Retd. Shafqat Kakakhel, Chairman Board of Governors, SDPI, Maj. Gen (Retd.) Mahmud Durrani, Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Aisha Khan, Chief Executive Officer, Mountain and Glacier Organization and Dr. Abid Suleri, Executive Director SDPI. Image: SDPI

Key lessons for stakeholder engagement and Research-into-Use

Based on extensive stakeholder engagement activities over the last 4 years, the PRISE team in Pakistan has the following lessons to share:

1. A major key lesson from this success story is that a 'one size fits all' approach to stakeholder engagement often limits the transfer and uptake of research evidence and information. It is essential that engagement should be tailored to fit the need, capacity and interest of the target stakeholders. A targeted strategy to engage a particular type of stakeholder delivers more - as opposed to a single approach used to target a diverse range of stakeholders.
2. Engagement strategies do not effectively deliver if they do not take into account changing socio-economic contexts and behaviours. In other words, engagement strategies should be dynamic and flexible in terms of time, to meet the changing needs of the stakeholders. Be ready to alter your engagement approach with changing socio-political environments and behaviours.

3. It is also important to recognise that stakeholder engagement is more than just information sharing. Long-term partnership building calls for a two-way relationship, which is based on information sharing and feedback, but also trust, respect and open dialogue.

Where do our challenges still lie going forward?

Going forward, the upcoming national election in June 2018 poses a significant risk for SDPI and the PRISE team in terms of its engagement with key policy makers. The existing policy structures may change completely if another party comes to power. This calls for the incorporation of this risk into our existing stakeholder and policy influence strategy.

Keeping this in mind, the SDPI team is already broadening its stakeholder network through building informal working relationships with mid-tier Ministry officials (who do not change with a change in government) and key leaders/potential policymakers in other political parties. In an endeavour to engage all political parties, SDPI is currently in the process of analysing the manifestoes (which dictate the party's policy focus during their period of governance) of all the political parties, while taking them on board, in order to provide feedback on proposed policies related to socio-economic aspects of climate change.