

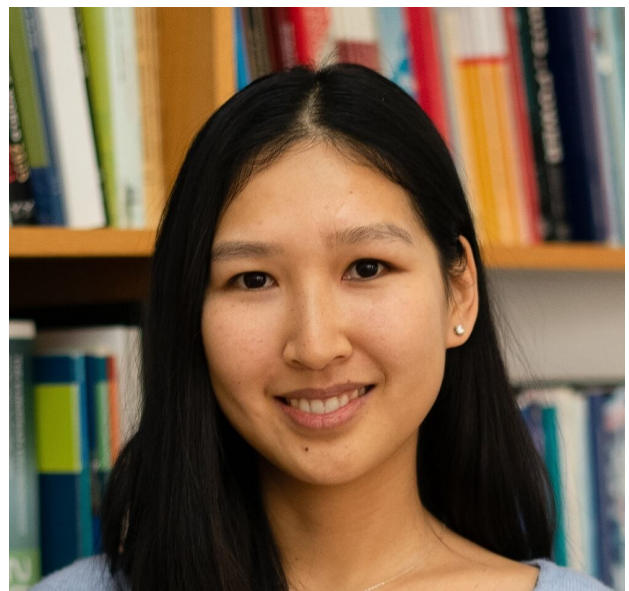
Zhenya Tsoy, Senior Communications Officer at the International Science Council

By Chris Manktelow

“Far from being limited to the confines of research labs or the pages of academic journals, science is woven into the very fabric of our daily existence. It's the foundation of the innovations that drive progress and the key to understanding the natural and social world that sustains us all.” – Zhenya Tsoy

Zhenya Tsoy's interest in science communication was first sparked by reading articles and books by science journalists, such as Ed Yong, whilst she was working as a communications officer for a development finance charity. “At the time, I didn't know much about science communication,” Tsoy says. “But I was captivated by how these journalists could demystify scientific research and make it not just understandable but impactful. Their ability to turn knowledge into something with real-world consequences inspired me to see the transformative power of clear, accessible science communication.”

Tsoy's fascination with the promise of impactful science communication led her to her current role as the Senior Communications Officer at the International Science Council. “I have a background in journalism, marketing and public relations, so I wanted to use my hard skills in these areas, but I could-



Tsoy believes that diversity is essential for effective communication. Image credit: Zhenya Tsoy.

n't choose a specific subject area,” she says. “Then I came across the International Science Council, which by design represents the full spectrum of sciences and has such a breadth of diverse subjects to work on. It was a really good match for me.”

The International Science Council was founded in 2018 to promote science as a global public good. It does so by catalysing and convening scientific expertise, advice and influence on issues of major concern to both science and society. “We pride ourselves on having a very diverse membership of organisations from the natural sciences to the social sciences and the humanities,” Tsoy explains. Her work is very varied. “We convene discussions, we write sto-

ries for the website, we talk to experts to produce reports on all kinds of topics. It means that one day, I'm communicating about gender equality in science, and the next day about plastic pollution or research evaluation practices.”

Tsoy works hard to ensure that communications produced by the International Science Council are inclusive and accessible to an international audience. “I am from Kyrgyzstan and we have other people from all kinds of backgrounds. I think it makes any communications that we do much more informed right away, just because different people are involved. If there is an event or we are putting together a panel of scientists, we always keep diversity in mind.”

The COVID-19 pandemic posed a real challenge for Tsoy and her colleagues as they tried to communicate accurate information about ongoing scientific research to the public. “A lot of what circulated online was pushed by influencers who might not necessarily have a scientific background,” Tsoy says. “There was a lot of disinformation, and it highlighted the importance of involving scientists, not only in producing science, but also in communicating it.”

Yet Tsoy remains hopeful about the future of science communication. “I really like seeing scientists going out there and talking about their research on social media or with journalists,” she says. “I think it makes a real difference in strengthening public trust in science. They are not just locked in their labs or universities doing their research.”

The highlight of Tsoy's career came last year when the International Science Council won a 2023 Digital Communications Award

for a multimedia campaign called Unlocking Science. Tsoy helped to bring the campaign to the public and tell global stories about how science addresses the challenges of global sustainability. From one woman's quest to save Malawi's crops, to a team of scientists battling bias in AI, the series features stories of people unlocking the power of science to solve some of the world's most pressing problems.

“I was really proud to have this campaign recognised at such a high, international level,” Tsoy says. “It was heart-warming to see that the judges saw the impact and really appreciated the idea behind the campaign, which was to show how science works in the field, and to show how regular researchers are making a difference in the world.”

About the author: Chris is a writer for an international development charity. He's fascinated by how people can use scientific research to solve some of the world's most pressing problems. He'd especially like to become a science journalist who reports on environmental issues.

Edited by Shannon Fowler

*The **Early Career Science Writer Network** is a global community of science media professionals within the first five years of a journalism career. The network offers training and development opportunities for its members and provides an informal space to chat openly with peers at the same level.*