



SOPAC



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*“Implementing Sustainable Water Resource and Wastewater
Management in Pacific Island Countries”*

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DEVELOPMENT OF A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR THE GEF PACIFIC IWRM PROJECT

BUILDING A COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Raising awareness is about communicating – communicating something that changes the way people perceive the world and therefore changes the way they think and act.

A communications strategy should be at the heart of every project or awareness campaign. It can be intuitive and ‘subconscious’ and still work fine but explicitly defining and detailing a communication strategy becomes important if we want to run big and complex campaigns involving a lot of people in various locations.

In its simplest form, a communications strategy defines what (and how) we communicate in order to achieve a change in the way people perceive the world, (and therefore the way they think and act). As a guideline to building a communications strategy, the following nine questions should be answered:

1. Who do we want to influence (the *target audience*)?
2. What are their motives for staying with the present situation?
3. What motivates them in general?
4. What is their current attitude and what do we want it to be?
5. What can we say/do to motivate them to change (the *message*)?
6. What are we asking people to do?
7. How do we make our voice heard? (the *platform*)?
8. How does the fact that it is us who says it influence what the audience will hear?
9. What is the best way to spread the message?

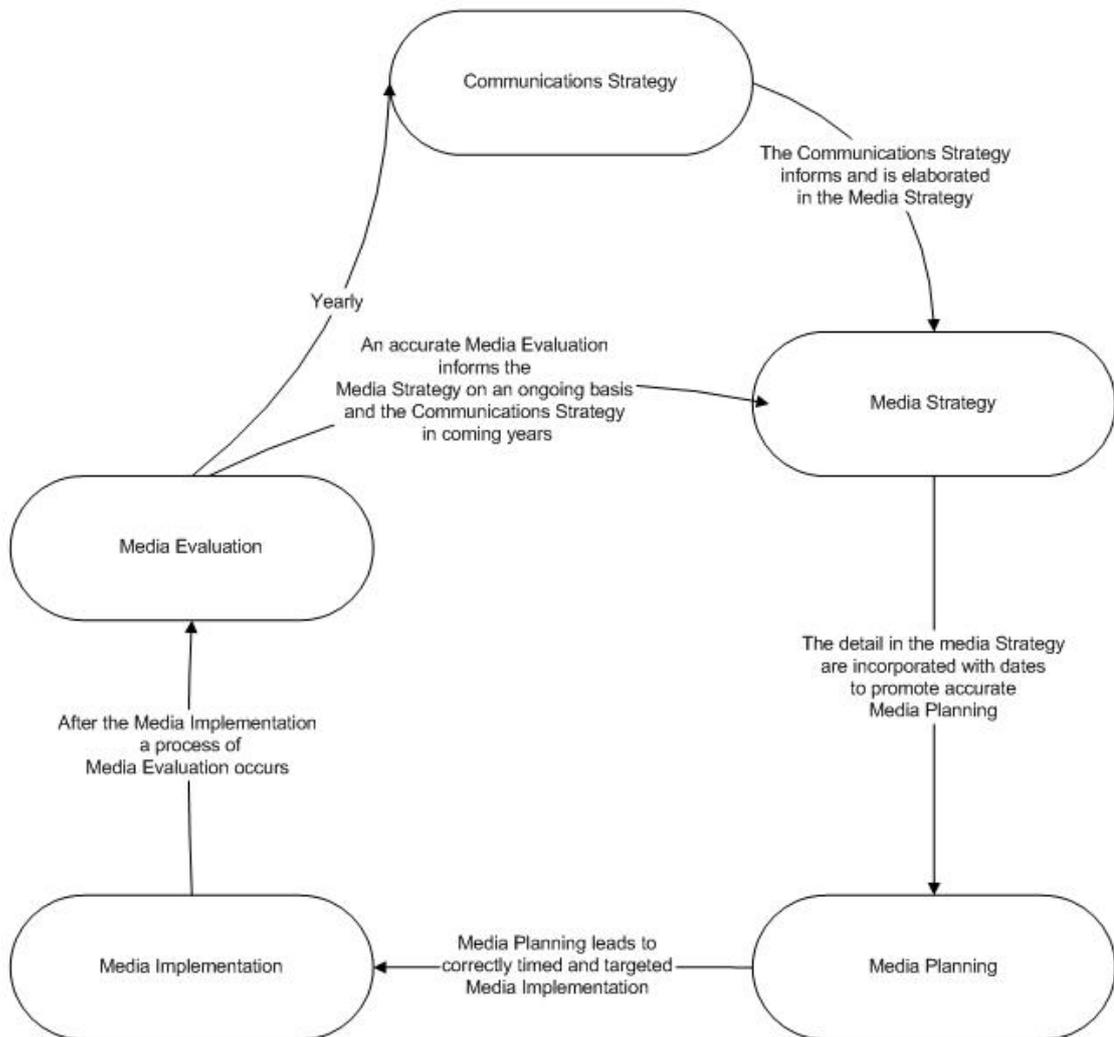
Working through these questions:

1. The answer to the first question should come out of a power analysis, and be the key actors in that analysis. It can be one person (e.g. a Minister) or many (cabinet, the general public).
2. Knowing and understanding your audience is the key to successful communication. Asking why change isn't already happening often leads to a better understanding of the dynamics of the present situation and of the potential for change.
3. Understanding your audience's background knowledge and key values will help to persuade them initially. It is always easier to motivate someone around concepts they know and understand and something they already believe, than to convince them of something new.
4. Defining the target audience's current attitude towards the problem as well as the attitude we want them to take in the future, is a helpful tool in developing key messages.
5. A winning *message* takes into account what will work with the audience to build support. The *message* is not restating the projects goals. It means making the case in a way that will be compelling to our target audience. If possible, different messages should be tested with the audience to see which one works best. There should be one and only one campaign message and it needs to be repeated innumerable times (in innumerable ways), but tailored for the different audiences. For it to be effective, the message must motivate the audience to act.
6. What do you actually want your target audiences to do? Change the way they consume, behave or make decisions? While your campaign message should stay the same for all your target audiences, you will usually expect different actions from them. (E.g. a politician to change water policy, a company to stop polluting, a journalist to communicate your message and the man on the street to care about water.)
7. The *platform* is the position, activity or ‘standing’ we need to reach above the background media noise – to make our voice heard. (Or how are we positioning ourselves in way that makes what we're saying important and

8. There has to be a certain level of congruence between what is being said and the way our audience perceives us. When defining the *message*, always consider how the audience will react if it is you who says it.

9. Which communication channel (or a combination of which) is the one to choose to best relay the message or reach the target audience. Is it mass media (print, radio, TV, etc), forums and/or individual discussions, t-shirts and posters, reports and brochures? Or is it a combination of all of the above?

Diagram 1.



How a communications strategy works:

- 1) A communications strategy is developed. It analyses and identifies target audiences, develops key messages and slogans.
- 2) The communications strategy informs the media strategy: what type of mass media, materials, events, or other vehicles will be used to convey your message to your target audience.
- 3) Then the actual roll out is planned. For example, The campaign will begin with a few well placed stories in the media to set the context for the issue, after which a public

education campaign (TV ads, posters, etc) will run, then an event (World Water day, etc) etc, etc. This is all put in a timeline to be rolled out.

- 4) The actual roll out.
- 5) Evaluation: How successful was the campaign? Did the people you were targeting get the message? If not, why? This then informs future communications strategies.

THE 11 STEPS TO WRITING A COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

1. Situation analysis

A background analysis (usually one page) of the situation that needs to be communicated. It identifies the key issues, general attitudes by key players to the issue and the reasons for communication. A situation analysis should provide background on the situation in a short and easily understandable way.

Information that needs to be in a situation analysis:

- What is the issue?
 - What is the position/policy you are trying to promote?
 - Who are the key players?
 - What else is going on globally, socially, in the media?
 - What sort of statistics and data are relevant for the issue e.g. surveys, polls (can be opinion polls) media stories, reports etc
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2. Setting objectives

- What is the ultimate vision?
 - What is the objective – in the long-term, medium-term and short-term?
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3. Power analysis

- Who are the key decision-makers?
 - Who influences the decision-makers?
 - for our objective
 - against our objective
 - How do we shift those against our objective, to be for it?
 - Are there other potential influencers?
 - Who are already our allies?
 - Who could be our allies?
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4. Identifying audiences

- Who are our key target audiences?
 - Prioritise target audiences
 - Are they active or passive?
 - What action/thought/feeling/behaviour do we want them to DO/CHANGE?
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5. Knowing your audience

- What motivates the audience in general?
 - What motivates them to stay with present situation/behaviour?
 - What would motivate them to change present situation/behaviour?
 - What are their identifying characteristics/demographics (work, gender, interests, age, etc)?
 - How do they receive their information (media, online, billboards, word of mouth etc)?
 - Who do they trust receiving information from, on this issue (scientists, government bodies, sportspeople, celebrities etc) – these are known as 'influencers'.
 - Do we really know the answers to the above questions? If not, how can we find out?
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6. Developing a message*

- Why should our target audience care about this issue?
- What common emotion does this issue tap into in the audience?
- What will motivate the audience to change their behaviour?
- What are the critical message facts/elements that need to be included in the message?
- What one sentence incorporates all of the above?
- Is this message measurable? How can we evaluate its success?

* The 'message' is a one sentence phrase that encapsulates the campaign's core argument and compels the target audience to change the way they think/behaviour. Messages may need to be identified for each individual piece of campaign work.

7. Developing a slogan*

- Whole team brainstorms slogans
- It is recommended team then sleeps on brainstormed ideas!
- Next day, each team members selects favourites
- Whole team gathers to cull slogans and agree on no more than top five
- Do these five messages meet target audience criteria?
- Do they meet message criteria?
- Do they address a passive or active audience?
- What stage of the adoption curve do they represent?
- Test shortlisted slogans (if possible)
- Based on testing results (if possible), choose most effective slogan
- If necessary, test this slogan on suitable audience again, before beginning design process.

* The 'slogan' is a catchy phrase of five words or less, that encapsulates the message in terms specific to the target audience and that motivates the audience to change.

8. Developing materials*

In choosing the most appropriate materials, consider:

- do the materials address an active or passive audience?
- are they a good fit with, or reflection of the slogan?
- is this the most direct communication you can have with this target audience?
- what distribution channels will you use?
- are the materials likely to inspire the target audience to act/change their behaviour?
- can you measure the impact of the materials on the target audience?;
- will the impact of the materials justify the resources invested in creating them?;
- is the overall cost of preparing, printing, designing, distributing etc within budget?

An Individual should be identified to:

- Lead concept development process with campaign team
- Organise design and production schedule
- Get quotes
- Engage designer
- Oversee proofs and production process
- Test materials
- Leads decision process on which design/option to go with
- Activate distribution channels.

* Materials are the physical tools we create to communicate our message to our audiences. They can be reports, brochures, stickers, flyers, posters, t-shirts, videos, radio pieces, web content, advertisements, beer mats etc.

9. Developing a media strategy

The media strategy should address:

- Timeliness – what is the hook that binds this event/story to this particular moment in time?
- Currency – is the issue relevant at the moment generally?
- Story type - is it a general news story, a visual piece for TV, a talkback radio story, human interest, soft media, rural, international story etc?
- Who is your interview talent – staff, third party endorsers, experts, celebrities etc
- The platform – is this story best delivered as a one-on-one briefing, an exclusive, at a press conference, at a media event/launch, as a general release, in an advisory/alert, as an email alert/release to targeted list, through a call around etc
- Measurability – how will you measure the effectiveness of this media work?

The media strategy should also contain:

- A timeline for roll-out of media materials (eg: press releases, press kits, backgrounders, media alerts, footage, pics etc)
 - Specified times and contact lists for media calls – pre or post event
 - Grabs, slogans, messages and training times to prep campaigners before interviews
 - Target media strategy – a table outlining the key media in each category (TV, radio, press etc) to be pursued for a particular event. It should list the name of the media outlet, your contact, their role, telephone and fax numbers, email address and other pertinent notes, including what form of coverage you are negotiating (eg: exclusive press story, feature article etc)
 - General media strategy – other media outlets to be informed with a press release. This list and the target media list should be reflected on Media Disk or other appropriate press release distribution service.
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10. Writing up the Communications Strategy

The Communications Strategy should contain:

- Brief situational analysis
- Campaign objective
- Target audience
- Influencers
- Allies/third party endorsers
- Campaign messages
- Campaign slogans
- All materials required and a timeline of their rollout
- Other communications tools such as press releases, web features, cyberactions, backgrounders, Q&As etc
- The Media Strategy (including list of target media)

The Communications Strategy should also address:

- potential competing messages – in the real world/media, or in the mind of target audience
 - potential obstacles – events, conditions or otherwise that may impede communications
 - list of allies/spokes-people/third party endorsers
 - web strategy – Will using the internet be helpful in getting the message across? If so how and where will you get support to do this work? [NOTE: web access in the Pacific is at various stages of development in different countries and therefore developing web strategies need to be considered on a country by country basis.]
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11. Evaluation

Media

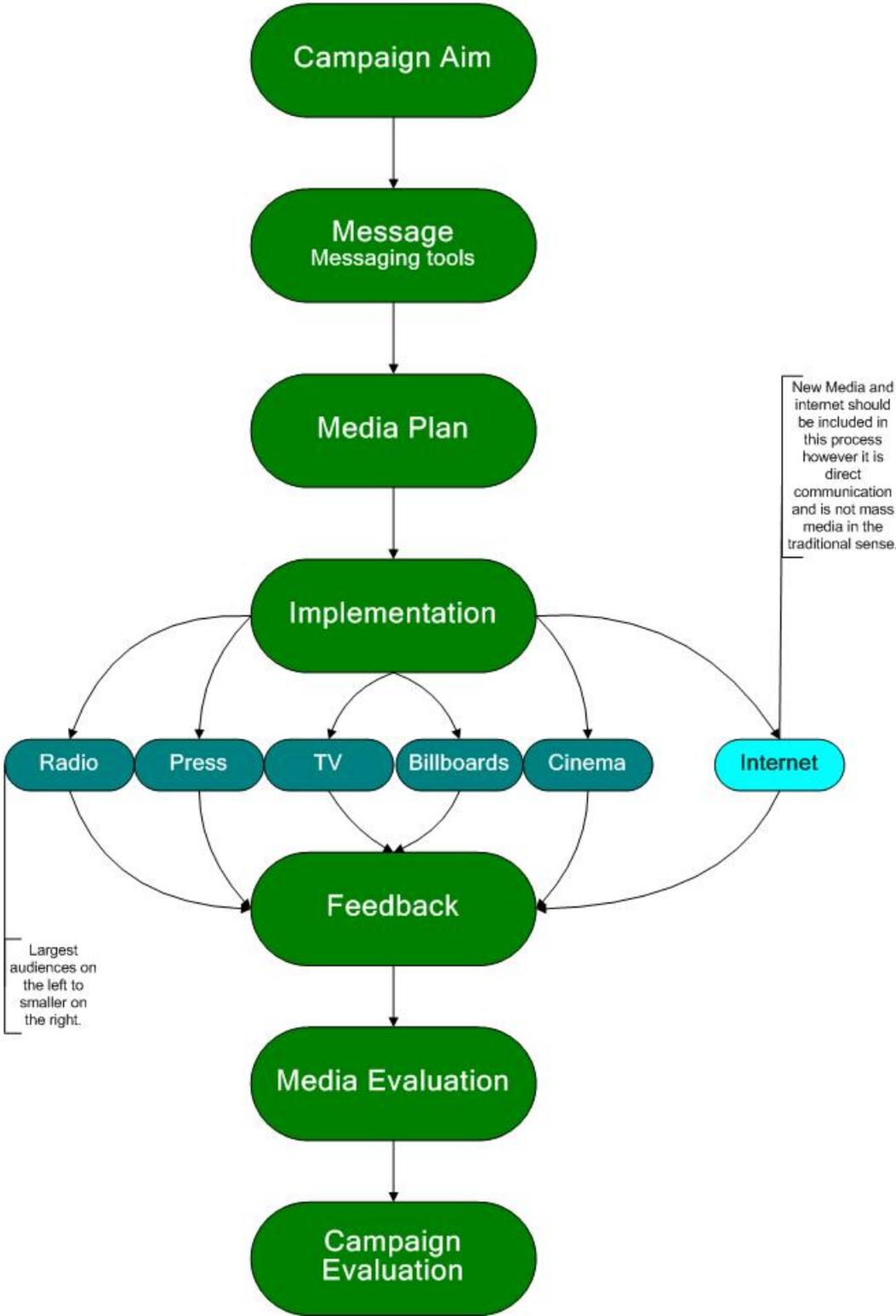
- Create a media log listing all media attained, media type, outlet, duration, spokesperson, tone, message etc.
- Target media list – did you achieve coverage in targeted media?
- Non-target media – did you achieve coverage in unexpected, non-targeted media?
- Were campaign messages and arguments clearly and convincingly covered?
- What single image/grab best conveyed the campaign message?
- What was the tone of the media coverage?
- Is/was follow up media work required in order to manage negative press?
- Which media type was most prevalent with this story (TV, radio, press, wires)?
- Were our images (photos, footage, file footage etc) used in the media coverage?
- Was there a particularly popular image used in the media coverage?
- Was there a particularly popular slogan, message or grab used in the media coverage?
- What impact, if any, did the media coverage have on the target audience?
- What was the level of our branding in the media coverage?

Audience

- Did the campaign achieve its objective?
- Was the message received and understood by the target audience (refer to measurability method)?
- How did the target audience respond? Did their behaviour change?
- Was there any “on the ground” feedback from the target audience?
- What were the communications factors which contributed to the success or failure of this campaign or event?
- If some aspects did not work, why?
- What impact did the allies/third party endorsers have on this project/event?
- Did the story achieve any broader communications goals? [e.g. did it help other interested sectors, like disaster relief, health etc, get exposure on their relationship to water?]

Diagram 3.

Communications Pathway and Strategy Building



Definitions:***Communication:***

The sharing of meaning by individuals, groups or organisations through the conveying of facts, ideas, feelings, values, etc from one party to another. The codes used may be linguistic (ie speech, writing, or signing) or those of non-verbal communications (eg gestures, images or symbols), but they require to be common to both parties for the most complete sharing of meaning or the fullest communication to take place.

The aim of communication may be to inform, warn, persuade or give pleasure with immediate effect; it may also be intended to serve wider and longer term purposes.

As with every sign, its interpretation will depend to a degree on the context in which it is produced and received.

Communication Strategy:

This is the outline of what we want to communicate, to whom we want to communicate it, what we want to achieve by communicating it, and what we want to achieve once we have communicated it. It is the floor plan, if you will, of how we implement our campaign.

Media plan

This is a tactical approach to the communications strategy. Mass media is one of the most important communications channels. A media plan draws from the Campaign Strategy to give an overview of how, when and where communication is to occur to be most effective. It provides internal and external context and is comprehensible as a stand alone document.

Target audience

“Whose co-operation do I need to reach my campaign goals”.

Who do we need to act? This is the ideal set of people who need to be informed of our message. They are the ones who have the power (and are most likely to) make a change and the ones who are most likely to influence those who do. The target audience needs to be defined before your message is crafted. There may be several quite different target audiences within a campaign or project.

Message

A simple, easy to remember “argument” that compels the listener (receiver) to act. An active sentence that informs, persuades and compels. It articulates the rationale or argument of our claims. A message should be crafted to suit the audience to which it will be delivered. The same message should be used throughout a campaign, unless the strategy determines a change at a certain point. The more times and more varied ways a message is delivered assures its success. There are **messaging tools** that can be used to allow the message to spread far. These tools may sometimes cause messaging confusion. Such tools include slogans, pitches, hooks, baseline, motto, etc.

Target Media

Mass media through which we wish to get our message across or by which our message will reach a broader target audience most effectively. These include press (both dailies and magazines), television, posters or billboards, and radio (etc). Many times the target audience determines the target media.

Feedback

In order to gauge whether communication is successful, there needs to be feedback. It is a reaction to a message, to communication. Feedback can also be represented by inaction. This is an aspect of communication is the only measurement of how we engage our target audiences.