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## **IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL AND REGIONAL IWRM COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIES IN SUPPORT OF IWRM MAINSTREAMING**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) depends on the collaboration and cooperation of individuals, organizations, and groups in society to work together to better manage water resources. Communication, education and public awareness, plays an important role to develop this collaboration and change in society.

Changing people's attitudes and behavior is not an easy thing to do. It takes time and effort. It can take years for a concept or behavior change to be accepted as part of the mainstream. Good

communications speeds up the process and is a vital tool in achieving this. People need to know why things need to be done differently. For them to embrace something new their fears and skepticism needs to be managed. They want to know how it will affect them, what are the pros and cons, if it will take a lot or a little effort on their part and how they can play a role.

Communications is a means to contextualize what you are trying to achieve in the everyday lives of people you work with and those you need to influence. A large concept like IWRM is difficult for many people to grasp. A concept can make sense in theory but finding ways to practically apply it can leave people feeling confused.

Not everyone can be expected to embrace a new idea straight away, no matter how much sense you think it makes. That is why it is important to identify key actors and stakeholders who can help you demonstrate what it is you're trying to do or influence others in the direction you want to take. Good communications with this group initially, through face to face meetings, discussions, work, etc, means that they will be able to communicate your goals onwards and be an ally for change.

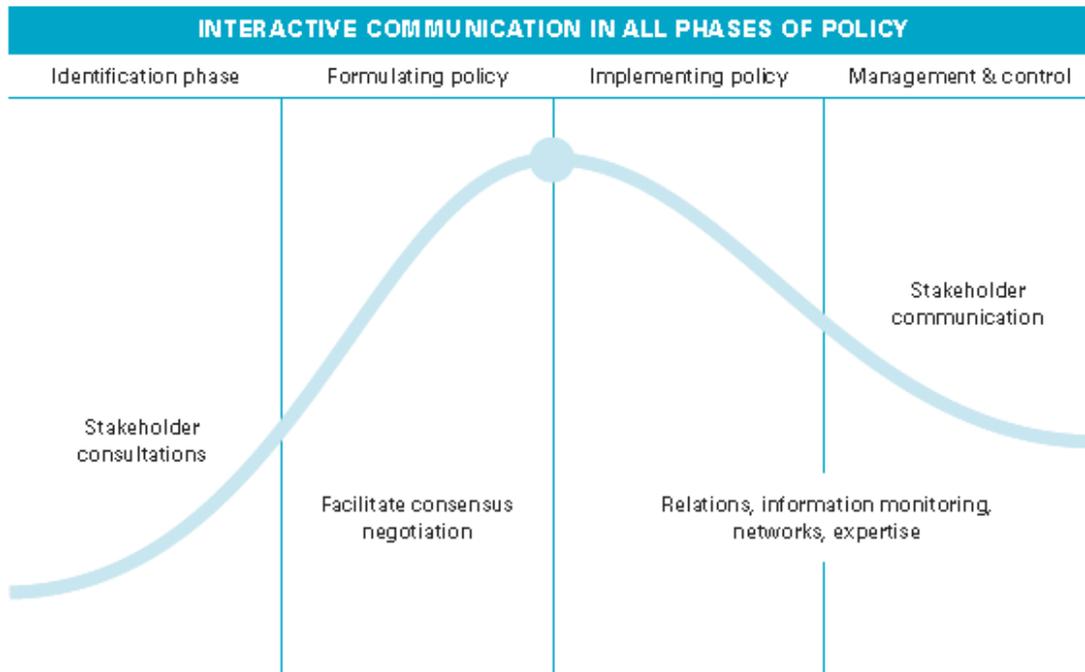
This paper looks at the way strategic communications can bring IWRM into the mainstream. It aims to provide a few practical pointers as to what types of communications can be used at different points of a project or policy development cycle. It also looks at the importance of stakeholder engagement as a way to increase communications capacity and as a mainstreaming tool. Finally,

## **2. COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES IN THE DIFFERENT PHASES OF POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

In this section we look at just how far the countries have progressed in terms of developing communications that will bring about change. To do so we should look at a model, developed by IUCN, that shows how communications supports the different stages of policy development.

The GEF IWRM demonstration projects are an important partner for the EU IWRM planning programme as they highlight the need for IWRM planning and IWRM based national water policy. The projects ground IWRM theory in reality with practical demonstrations that help identify and contextualise key policy areas needed in national water policies. GEF project managers and IWRM focal points must work hand in hand to communicate the link between demonstration and policy.

Figure 1 shows four phases policy development and the role of interactive communication. The dot represents the adoption of policy, while the line delineates the percentage of each type of communication in each phase. These phases also correlate to steps needed to build efficient communications for the demonstration projects.



**Figure 1** Communication in all phases of policy ( Hesselink et al, 2007).

#### **Identification phase:**

During the policy identification phase the role of communications is to put the issue on the agenda, and to track the role of various organizations in society that are doing so. It is a time to assess how important the issue is, and the diversity of views held. At this time much of the work is to listen to what people say and how people feel about the issue, track how water issues are portrayed in the mass media, and understand the views of stakeholder groups. This allows you to pin point specific issues affecting the target groups when it comes to changing behavior or designing policy. The idea of IWRM needs to be contextualized for the various and the general public, in order to gain acceptance and facilitate the idea that what you are trying to do is better than what was once considered 'normal' or 'business as usual'. Therefore understanding the different attitudes and opinions to this change will help you develop targeted materials for each audience.

Most countries are past this stage. The development of the projects and their roll out has already resulted in consultations with various stakeholders, an understanding of the roles and attitudes of various actors and the issues surrounding project/policy implementation.

**Formulation phase:** In this phase communications is used to raise public awareness of the issues regarding IWRM, increase the public's understanding of why 'business as usual' needs to change, why new policy is needed and create broadly based support for the issues. The problems tackled are those which are accepted but for which solutions have yet to be found or trialled. At this stage the target groups are opinion leaders, decision makers and the general public.

This is the stage that a majority of projects are at. There is a general consensus among stakeholders that there are merits for IWRM, that their ideas and opinions have been taken into consideration and that there is some political will to make changes. Countries are either developing or implementing communications strategies. They are also working to raise public awareness of the issues the projects are trying to address.

**Implementation phase:** At this stage the aim is to communicate information about how to implement the policy. The idea is to communicate the substance of the policy and the accompanying measures to specific target groups. Intermediaries such as associations or NGOs play an important role in reaching target groups. Here, communications is used to mobilize networks and stakeholders, to explain benefits of participation and to build capacity for them in mobilizing society. The types of communications include information campaigns, specific information materials, marketing and advertising, training, education, consultation with target groups and stakeholders.

No country has yet implemented policy, however some are close and are already engaged in the above activities. This phase is used to support policy implementation or activities within the projects.

**Management and control:** Here communications needs to sustain newly adopted attitudes and behavior. The aim is to provide information about the policy that is being pursued as well as provide feedback reactions to that policy. Communications may be in the form of an active service explaining complex regulations and legislation, or announcing modifications of policy instruments such as to incentives or legislation.

No country is at this stage.

### 3. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The multi-sectoral nature of water and sanitation issues has led to the development of complex and often fragmented programs and action plans, with many departments responsible for parts of the problem. Government departments and ministries responsible for water and sanitation require collaboration from other government organizations at national and local level, and even internationally. Communications, awareness and public awareness is the means to set up the enabling conditions for collaboration so that policies, incentives and regulations across sectors encourage IWRM.

The IWRM planning process and demonstration projects necessarily involves the engagement of a wide range of stakeholders to be successful. Aside from other government departments, IWRM needs support at varying times and places, from NGOs, indigenous and local communities, business and industry, scientists, farmers and fishing associations, women's groups, youth, consumer associations and community based groups.

These groups may have varying degrees of knowledge about water and sanitation management, ingrained attitudes and ways of doing things, they may have complex or antagonistic relationships with other stakeholders and they will access information in different ways.

Coming up with a strategy to engage and communicate with all stakeholders can therefore be a daunting prospect, especially given the limited resources and capacity of many of the demonstration project teams, IWRM focal points and the PCU. Communication, education and raising awareness between project managers or IWRM focal points and stakeholders is a vital component and can be used to build trust, understanding and shared agreements for action and to reduce conflict. It should be considered as "part of the day job", and as important as managing a budget or a team. Investing time in communications pays dividends by way of better service delivery, more satisfied stakeholders, and better informed and motivated people.

<b>Stakeholders</b>
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Stakeholders are those people or organisations which are vital to the success or failure of an organisation or project to reach its goals.

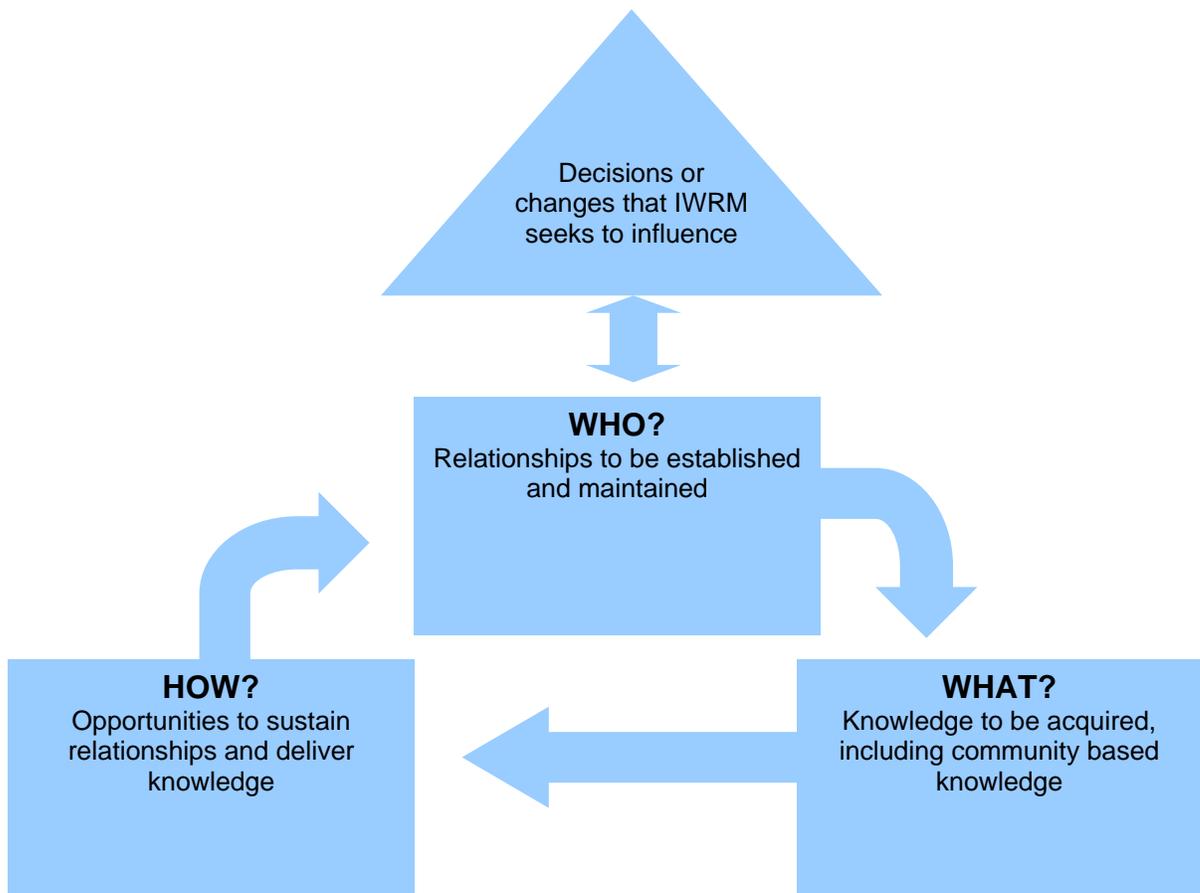
**Primary stakeholders are**

- (a.) those needed for permission, approval and financial support and
- (b.) those who are directly affected by the activities of the organisation or project.

**Secondary stakeholders** are those who are indirectly affected.

**Tertiary stakeholders** are those who are not affected or involved, but who can influence opinions either for or against.

Properly identifying key partners within different stakeholder groups and building a good working relationship with them takes time and effort initially but, managed properly, it can make the job of communicating easier. Stakeholders will communicate the principles of IWRM further within their own networks reaching a wider audience than if the project tried to do everything on their own. Also it is easier to convince a government or other stakeholders to enact national IWRM policies or replicate projects nationally if they are approached by many different stakeholders that agree with and understand what it is you're trying to do and are advocating for it.



**Figure 2** Networks provide for a mutually beneficial relationship that significantly adds to the value of the various actors.<sup>1</sup>

**EXAMPLE: The importance of stakeholders in interactive policy making**

**Advantages of involving stakeholders in interactive policy making**

- Interests, goals and experiences of different stakeholders that might hinder policy implementation will be clarified at an early stage so that they can be dealt with effectively;
- Seemingly separate problems such as water, ecosystem diversity, climate change and agriculture can be linked and solved in relation to each other;
- Creative solutions from practitioners can be integrated;
- Local and indigenous knowledge about the issue is brought into the decision making process;
- Stakeholder support is developed during the policy making process; otherwise stakeholder support has to be won after the policy is announced, which can be difficult.

**When will interactive policy making work?**

- When people are aware that they are a stakeholder in an issue and that they can have an impact;
- When there is mutual inter-dependence (i.e. people negotiate if they have an objective and realize that they need each other to reach it, and each stakeholder has a reasonable level of power);
- When contradictory interests are more or less the same size;
- When stakeholders have concrete opportunities to meet with each other and understand each others' language.

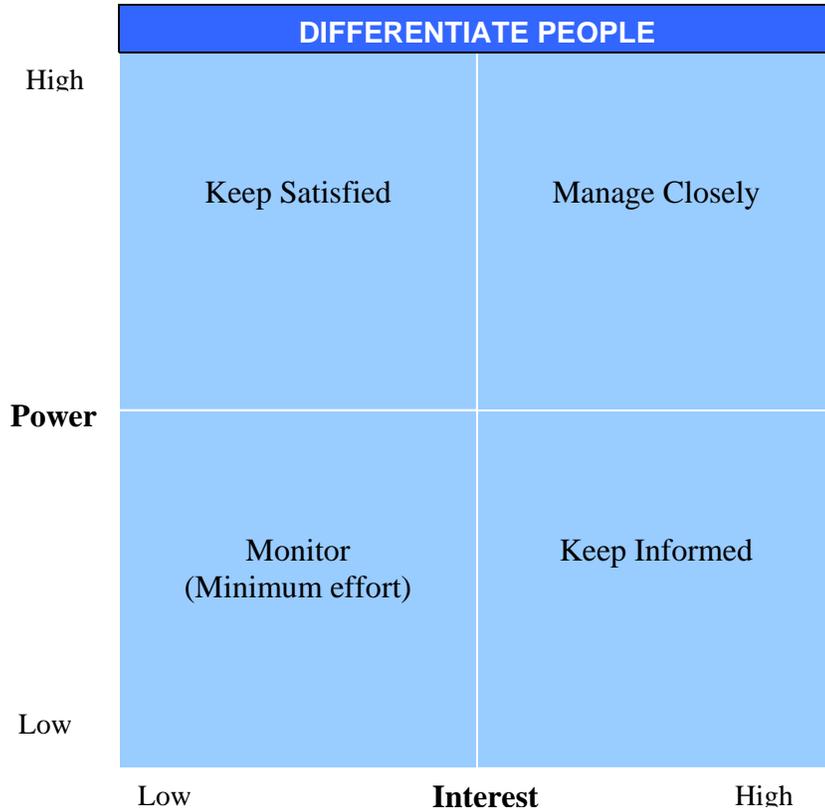
**If the above conditions are absent then we need to try to create those conditions by:**

- Making stakeholders aware of the issue and that it is possible to find a solution;
- Providing support to less powerful stakeholders to organize themselves and formulate their ideas, and
- Creating concrete opportunities for people to come together in a manner that is designed to build trust.

### 3.1 MANAGING NETWORKS

To manage your workload and to maximize efforts you can segment the people in your network according to their interest and power to make change for your objectives, as shown in the figure below. Those with high power and interest to make change are important to you and need to be managed closely to be an ally. Those with less interest in IWRM, but have great influence, keep satisfied with the information and interaction.

<sup>1</sup> Frits Hesselink, Wendy Goldstein, Peter Paul van Kempen, Tommy Garnett and Jinie Dela. Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) A toolkit for National Focal Points and NBSAP coordinators (Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and IUCN: Montreal, Canada) 2007



**Figure 3** The amount of effort needed to manage communication with different stakeholders.

So for example, someone with a high interest and high power – like a minister directly involved in water management, development partner, community leader or implementing partner – there should be considerable effort made to communicate developments, through meetings, planning, event coordination, etc.

**4. MAKING THE MESSAGE MEANINGFUL: FRAMING**

To involve people, nothing is more powerful than working on their emotions, and connecting with the motives which drive people.

People have conceptual maps in their minds—or frames—that help them sort incoming information quickly and to make sense of it. Frames serve to organize the central ideas of an issue, help communicate why an issue might be a problem and what should be done. Journalists use frames to organize stories and to appeal to intended audiences. People tend to use opinion leaders to make sense of issues rather than analyzing information for themselves, and tune into those opinion leaders or media channels that they trust. The first words of a story can trigger a certain “mental model” in people’s minds so that they say to themselves “aha so this is about” and stop listening to the details. Complex ideas not framed within an audience’s reality can also make them switch off as they feel it is too complex or irrelevant to them. This can make it difficult to change people’s ideas.

Research shows “framing” is a valuable tool for redefining an issue. Different strategies are needed to communicate in ways that either resonate with the values and predispositions of particular audiences or that directly address fundamental misconceptions. In the table the general

set of frames that appear to span science-related issues are used to illustrate how biodiversity is defined in accord with these frames. In each situation work is needed to identify the issue-specific phrases, images, and cultural references that trigger these underlying social meanings, and to better understand the communication channels that engage specific audiences.

<b>Frame</b>	<b>IWRM defined as</b>
<p><b>Social progress</b></p> <p>The “we can all do this for the betterment of our people” message.</p>	<p>Providing for quality of life, security from natural disasters, food security, water security, cultural diversity; human rights for a quality environment.</p>
<p><b>Economic development</b></p> <p>The “It’s good for growth, business, and development” message</p>	<p>Economic values of water services; ameliorate floods and droughts; direct benefits to the poor in use of natural resources (fishing and crops); need for water supply and environment protection for tourism industry; the ability to access more/increased aid funding for projects directly related to IWRM, for example, sustainable land management projects.</p>
<p><b>Pandora’s box/ alarmists</b></p> <p>The “we’re all going to die unless we do something about it” message</p>	<p>The impending loss of water systems for human survival; the increasing impacts of climate change on water resources, such as sea level rise and extreme and prolonged drought; ecosystem breakdown and threats to human survival</p>
<p><b>Scientific uncertainty/fatalism</b></p> <p>The “We aren’t sure what’s going to happen, but we’ve got nothing to lose by being prepared” message</p>	<p>Precautionary principle, adaptive strategies to limit the impact of climate change to water resources.</p>
<p><b>Morality/ethics</b></p> <p>The “We’ve got a moral responsibility to future generations/our way of values to ensure this happens” message</p>	<p>Responsibility as stewards, the traditional values of our forefathers to sustainably ensure a balance between consumption and protection, provide water to future generations, or preserving eco-systems and the planet as a matter of religious morality</p>
<p><b>Public accountability</b></p> <p>The “you have a duty to do this” message</p>	<p>Partnerships for integrated water resources management with communities, business and government. Government responsibility to provide adequate water and sanitation.</p>

<p><b>Third way/ alternate path</b></p> <p>The “there are new ways to deal with this” message</p>	<p>Co-management of natural resources, direct benefits to communities from water management and use, such as payment for eco-system services;</p>
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**Figure 5** Examples of frames and how they relate to IWRM

When thinking about what it is you want to say to people always think about whether the way you frame the message will get the response you want. For example: a businessperson might not care that what you’re trying to do is an excellent consultative process, but they may be interested if it shows them to be good citizens and a community leader.

Finally, depending on your audience you need to decide just how you are going to engage with them. Meeting the heads of villages will in most cases be a much better option than trying to reach them with the mass media.

When selecting ways to inform it is always useful to understand how people retain information. Research shows that audiences do not easily remember all the information that is provided to them and that more interactive methods of delivery lead to higher retention.

Having people be an active audience, meaning that they are actually doing something, as opposed to just absorbing information, is a much better way of ensuring that the information is retained. A person might look at a poster and not retain a single thing that they see. However get them to help design the poster and they will retain the information longer.

Different methods and percentage of retention:

- Lecture = 5%
- Reading = 10%
- Audiovisual = 20%
- Demonstration = 30%
- Discussion Group = 50%
- Practice by doing = 75%
- Teach others/ immediate use of learning = 95%

**5. Conclusion**

In order to bring the ideas and activities that you are trying to promote into the mainstream it is necessary to understand what the current reality is for your audience, and in what part of this reality your new idea can fit in. It is important to choose stakeholders that will help you introduce this new idea into society, through demonstrating it, championing it, or putting in place legislative and regulatory mechanisms to support it. These stakeholders need to be supported through good communication in order for them to take your idea further. Finally, your audiences need to be communicated to in a way that is relevant to them and in a way that they retain information.