

Communicating for Results!

A Communications Planning Guide for International Waters Projects

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1. YOU AND THIS GUIDE

1.1. Is this Guide for you?

If you are an International Waters Project Manager, or team member, and you want to know how to use communications to help achieve your project objectives - then this Guide is for you.

Perhaps you're not even 100% sure what communications means or even where to begin. Or maybe you already know quite a lot about communications, but you just like a few tips or insights from other Project Managers doing similar work in this area.

This Guide was designed by International Waters project staff to help other projects find effective ways to improve the planning and implementation of their communications activities. The Guide is based on examples, case studies, and lessons, from a range of International Waters Projects from around the world, and it will help you to identify best-practices and avoid common pitfalls and mistakes.

The most important lesson provided by this Guide is that communications can deliver real results for your project if you build it into the earliest stages of your planning process.

This Guide will show you that, if done right, communications can provide excellent tools to help you reach your project objectives and it will give you some simple ideas on how to do it. The Guide may not provide you all the information you need in this Guide but it will provide you with a solid starting point.

The principles in this Guide can be applied to small, village-based projects or large-scale national and regional projects. At the same time, there is no "one-size fits all" solution. Every communications initiative will differ depending on its objectives and the audience it is trying to influence.

What are GEF International Waters Projects?

International Waters (IW) Projects are funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). They are designed to help countries protect water systems that are shared by more than one nation, such as river basins, groundwater resources, or large marine ecosystems. They are often implemented in settings with vastly different histories and cultures.

Because water does not respect national boundaries, countries must work together to encourage the sustainable development of these large water systems. The GEF helps countries to collaborate with their neighbors to try and minimize harmful human activities and to foster the sustainable use of these shared resources.

Through its work and projects, the GEF plays a catalytic role in helping nations making full use of policy, legal and institutional reforms and investments necessary to address these complex concerns.

Around the globe, several IW Projects are attempting to protect shared water bodies from the harmful impacts of human behaviours such as pollution and the depletion of resources. Some of these projects already use strategic communications tools to:

- > Raise public awareness of resource management problems
- > Encourage people to change damaging behaviours
- > Build public support for the introduction of other incentives and rules to change behaviours and protect shared natural resources

1.2. What does this Guide include?

The Guide is divided into six main sections. Users are encouraged to select the most appropriate tools and adapt the Guide to meet the needs of their particular project.

Section 1 will help you decide whether this Guide is for you, how you can use it, and how you can help us improve this resource.

Section 2 defines communications and stresses the importance of incorporating it into your overall strategy and activities right from the very start of your project. It provides examples of different approaches to communications and tips on how to get help from communications experts.

Section 3 shows how you can integrate communications into your project. This “tool box” will help you plan and implement your communication efforts. It is broken down into three sub-sections:

1. Assessing the Situation
2. Developing a Strategy
3. Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

Section 4 provides case studies on how three GEF IW projects used communications to achieve their project objectives.

Section 5 summarizes the Guide’s key points.

Section 6 includes Annexes that go deeper into a few subjects introduced in the main sections of the Guide.

1.3. How can you help us?

This Guide includes many suggestions that were made by project managers and staff from the GEF International Waters Projects, the UNDP, and other international organizations during a workshop held in Vienna, Austria from January 19-20, 2006.

During this workshop it became clear that well-planned communications are already resulting significant successes throughout the IW network. These successes include:

- > Better understanding of project goals and objectives among target audiences;
- > Directly contributing to changes in environmental indicators e.g. 60% reduction in the volume of household waste produced by a pilot community;
- > Increasing international dialogue and cooperation on environmental issues
- > Growing use of project websites and other communications resources as trusted sources of information
- > Encouraging the use of 'champions' to raise awareness of environmental issues and highlight possible solutions among a wider audience.

It is intended that this Guide should be a communications resource -- a "living document" -- and that future versions will further help to share project successes, experiences and lessons throughout the IW/GEF network. In order to be of ongoing value to all new and existing IW/GEF projects, please submit your comments, feedback and suggestions to:

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2. COMMUNICATIONS AND YOUR PROJECT

2.1. What is communications?

Communication means many different things to many different people. Is it a science or an art? Is it linked to public participation, social marketing, or education? Is it about telling or about listening?

The answer is yes to all of the above. But, in this Guide, we want to help you understand how strategic communications can best be **used** as a tool to help achieve your project objectives.

"This water is polluted." "You should get involved." "Fish populations have improved." These are all typical messages one might find sent out by an IW project.

But why send them? And to who? And what do you want the recipient of the message to do once they get it? The answers to these questions will help to achieve the goals in your overall project strategy.

2.2. Communications and your overall IW Project Strategy

Every International Waters project has a specific set of goals or objectives. There's also a strategy that describes the activities and tools that will be used to reach those goals.

It's up to the Project Manager, usually in conjunction with their Project Team, to determine what activities and tools will be in the Project Plan. Some examples of possible activities and tools include: research, demonstration or pilot sites, policy and advocacy work, financial grants to NGOs for hard and soft expenses, and of course... communications!

2.3. When should you include communications?

Whether we like it or not communications is part of just about every project. If your project has any of the following goals strategic communications can be used as a tool to help achieve them:

- > Informing others about what your project is and does, especially its expected environmental benefits
- > Encouraging others to perform certain activities required to achieve project goals
- > Raising awareness of issues and solutions
- > Encouraging people to participate in certain activities
- > Persuading or convincing people to believe or accept new ideas or solutions
- > Changing certain behaviours among certain people
- > Educating or training people in how to apply new solutions

For example, let's say the overall goal of your project is to reduce water pollution in a lake shared by two countries. Your overall strategy might include activities such as researching the current environmental status of the lake, improving the capacity of a local NGO through financial help, and investing in new pollution-reduction technologies.

It might also need to inform local people about what the problems are. It may need to convince polluters that their activities are harming the environment. And it may need to encourage government officials to develop new incentives and disincentives to discourage continued polluting activities. Every time you need to inform, convince or encourage, you will need to use the right message, delivered the right way, to the right audience. This is the art of strategic communications.

2.4. What not to do next

The effectiveness of your communications will depend on how well it is planned from the start. It should be an integral part of your Project Plan in the section describing the activities and tools that will be used to reach your project objectives. Unfortunately this is not always the case.

When Project Managers fail to include communications in their project plans this means there has been no consideration of how communications can be used as strategic tool. There are no funds to pay people to develop and implement communications strategies. There are no resources available for developing or implementing communications activities and products.

In these cases, the following situation is bound to turn up: half way through a project aiming to reduce water pollution, a Project Manager wakes up to the fact that his reports need to be re-packaged, printed and disseminated, but there's nobody with experience in how to do it right, and there are no available funds. The result is that some thick, unreadable, uninteresting reports go to a few people, hardly anybody ever reads them, the useful information that was collected is never applied, and the water stays exactly the same as it was before – polluted.

2.5. Planning communications strategically from the start

Anytime your project is geared towards disseminating information, raising awareness, changing attitudes, or encouraging people to take action, - you will have to factor the use of strategic communications into your planning. It could form an entirely separate part of the plan, or be included as a key tool across the different components of your plan.

To ensure the most effective use of communications it's also a good idea to develop a separate Communications Strategy. Developing a Communications Strategy doesn't need to take months or cost thousands of dollars. All it needs is a simple understanding of how to make such a strategy and a committed willingness to answer some basic, fundamental questions about what you want your communications to achieve.

Many project managers think developing a Communications Strategy simply means more unnecessary paperwork. Wrong! The investment put into smart communications planning at the start will pay off many times over in better relationships and better results.

Here's a simple example. Instead of deciding to make "some posters about the project", strategic communications will help you to:

- > focus on exactly who you are trying to reach;
- > what you want them to think or do, and;
- > exactly what products or activities provide the most effective way for communicating with them.

Posters may not be the best answer. In fact, they rarely are.

2.6. How to use communications in your sub-projects

Some GEF projects have numerous technical sub-projects managed by different managers. The Danube Regional Project, for example, had some 80 sub-projects, many of which were contracted out to companies and consultants in different countries and with different levels of communications experience. In the Pacific IWP there were related projects in 14 different countries covering an area over an area three times larger than China.

In such cases, the ideal solution is to have one central Communications Specialist for the overall project who can ensure that the entire project has a Communications Strategy. They'll also work with these sub-project managers to ensure their communications activities are clearly integrated with the overall strategy. The Communications Specialist can train sub-project managers in how to use communications strategically, and make sure that implementation and monitoring are also performed effectively.

2.7. Getting the right help

Ideally, every project team should have a designated communications specialist and that person should be given every opportunity to input into project planning. In other words they should be a key member of the project team. If this is not possible in your project, see more on this topic under Annex 1: "Working with outside consultants.

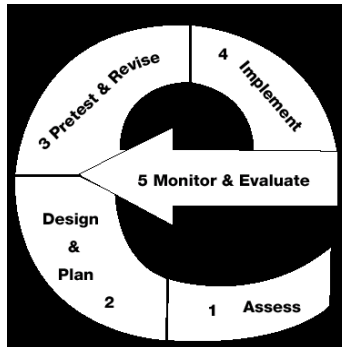
2.8. Approaches to strategic communications

Most methodologies for strategic communications contain the same steps and components, although they may be in a different order or have different priorities. The important thing is to choose one that best fits your needs.

Two methodologies are presented here. The first one is used by the International Waters Project of the Pacific Islands and the second by the Danube Regional Project. Section 4 of this Guide presents a case study for each of these two projects.

2.8.1. Pacific IWP - Project Methodology

The framework for the Pacific IWP is based on a useful six-stage planning process developed by GreenCom, the strategic environmental communication project of the U.S. Agency for International Development.



Stage 1. Assess

It's important to find out all you can about:

- > The specific problem you want to address
- > The situation or context in which the problem occurs
- > The audiences you are targeting and;
- > The support and resources you will need to achieve your objectives

Stage 2. Plan

In your Communications Strategy you need to clarify:

- > your long-term project goals (behaviour change, changes in water quality etc)
- > the short-term, measurable, objectives that can be achieved by your communications activities and;
- > who will do what – and by when.

Stage 3. Design

You need to make sure that your communications activities and products are designed to meet your specific objectives. You will need to design different approaches, depending on whether your objectives are to raise awareness, encourage participation, change attitudes, or promote new behaviours.

Stage 4. Pre-testing

You need to pre-test the messages and materials with the target audience to determine their effectiveness.

Stage 5. Implementation

You need to make sure you have the people, resources, and partners to put everything into action. You also need to make sure that you are prepared to manage any unexpected situations.

Stage 6. Evaluation

You need to be able to measure the impact of your communications activities.

2.8.2. Danube Regional Project (DRP) Methodology

DRP strategic communications are based on a methodology that begins with defining the **Issue** – what is the problem and why is there a need for solutions? The **Desired Outcome** then defines what is to be reached in the future (like a 'vision'). It then defines who the **Target Audiences** are – which people are needed to act toward achieving the Desired Outcome – and what actions we want them to perform. **Main Messages** with **Calls to Action** for each Target Audience are then defined.

This is followed by defining what products and activities, or **Delivery Vehicles**, the messages will be packaged into for delivery to the Target Audiences. It then describes **Who Will Do the Communicating** and what resources are required, with budget. This is followed in the end by **Monitoring** and **Evaluation**.

A strategy will therefore include the following **components**:

1. Issue
2. Desired Outcome
3. Target Audiences
4. Main Messages and Calls to Action
5. Delivery Vehicles
6. Who Is Doing the Communicating?
7. Monitoring and Evaluation

According to "Now Hear This: The Nine Successful Laws of Advocacy Communications" there are three MUST HAVES for any successful communications programme. You must have:

1. Clear, measurable goals
2. Extensive knowledge of whom you are trying to reach and what moves them
3. Compelling messages that connect with your target audience

In order to ensure these three core components are at the center of the campaign the authors recommend that you:

1. Start with systematic planning that is reviewed and then revised

2. Specify for people what to do, how to do it, and why
3. Make the case for why action is needed now
4. Match strategy and tactics to target audience
5. Budget for success
6. Rely on experts when needed

3. THE COMMUNICATION TOOLKIT

This section provides you with detailed steps on how to develop and implement a Communications Strategy and evaluate its success.

3.1. Methodology

The methodology used in this section will be a combination of the two methodologies presented in section 2.8 used by the Pacific and Danube projects. It includes three main steps:

- > Step 1: Assess
- > Step 2: Develop Strategy
- > Step 3: Implement, Monitor and Evaluate Strategy

3.2. Step 1: Assess

This first step provides an assessment of the current situation. The four key areas that need to be assessed are:

1. The problem
2. The context
3. Target audiences
4. Project resources

3.2.1. The Problem

- > What is the problem your project is planning to address?
- > What are the most common or serious consequences of the problem?
- > What can you already say about the problem?
 - o Is it getting worse?
 - o Who are the people most affected by the problem? How would you describe them (young, old, from a certain area)?
 - o Are there specific groups or individuals that are causing the problem?
- > How can the problem be measured?
- > What are all the possible ways you could address the problem?
- > What are the most cost-effective ways to prevent the problem?
- > Who are potential experts you should interview to get more information on the problem?

3.2.2. The Context

- > What trends or other factors might affect the situation or circumstances in which your project will take place?
- > Which groups, community leaders, or other individuals, do you foresee supporting or opposing your project or campaign?
- > Are there any policies or laws that might affect your project?
- > Are there any other projects addressing the same issue?
- > What external opportunities could your project take advantage of?
- > What external threats will you plan and prepare for?

3.2.3. Target Audiences

Primary audiences

We usually need to start by targeting those audiences that are causing the problem we want to address. In order to make the most effective use of your limited communications resources you need to develop a clear understanding of exactly why they think or act in the ways that they do:

- > Exactly who is causing the problem?
- > How are they causing it?
- > What do they currently think about the issue or problem?
- > What costs and benefits do they perceive in acting in this way?
- > What would you like them to do instead?
- > Is the change easy to understand and implement?
- > What costs and benefits would your audience associate with this change?
- > What would best motivate them to change? What help will they need?

Often the people you want to communicate with may not even be aware that they are the cause of the problem you want to address. If your communications appear to be pointing the finger or blaming them for the problem then you will almost certainly lose their support or cooperation before you have even started. In any form of communications the key to success is to know your audience.

Secondary audiences that support and influence primary audiences

A major focus of a Communications Strategy is usually about gaining the support of key decision-makers responsible for allocating resources and developing policies and institutions necessary to achieve your project goals.

As a result, you may need to develop strategic alliances with, and communication activities for, community leaders, government and non-government organisations, politicians, donors and other groups and individuals.

- > What groups or individuals are most likely to influence the perceptions and actions of your main target audience? This may also include political constituents and mass media.
- > Who does your target audience trust to provide them with accurate information?
- > Who do they usually ask questions about the topic?
- > Will the target audience respond better to a peer, an authority figure, or a celebrity associated with your issue?

Audience research

If you feel you need to know more about the knowledge, attitudes, and awareness of your target audiences, you can always use a number of available audience research methods.

Methods can be either qualitative (e.g. asking people questions), quantitative (e.g. counting how many people think or do something), or a combination of the two. Examples include focus groups, interviews, surveys, or just plain old observation of sample target audiences. The size of your target audience may influence the methods you choose. With large audiences, quantitative tools may be easier. With smaller audiences, qualitative tools such as focus groups or interviews are more effective (*see Annex 2 for more on focus groups*).

If you can segment your audiences into groups with similar needs, you can be more effective in tailoring your messages and products. Possible groups could be based on age, location, income, occupation, lifestyle or ethnicity. The goal of "segmenting" your audience is to identify groups of people who are like each other (e.g. have the same views or habits) and more likely to respond to particular messages in similar ways.

3.2.4. Project Resources

You need to match your project strategy with the resources available to you. In some cases you may need to either narrow your focus or get more funding.

- > What is the total budget available for your communications project?
- > Where is the funding coming from?
- > Do you need to seek additional funding before proceeding with the project?
- > Is the project feasible to develop and implement at this time?
- > Can more funding be easily secured?
- > How much time do you and members of your Project Team have to devote to the project?
- > Can you include experienced communicators on your project team from existing colleagues or do you need to contract externally?
- > What level of access does your organisation have to audience members?

3.3. Step 2: Develop Strategy

This second step builds on the results derived from your assessment of the problem, audiences, and your resources.

A **Communications Strategy** needs to include the following sections:

1. Issue or Problem
2. Goals and Objectives
3. Who's Doing the Communicating with What Resources
4. Target Audiences
5. Main Messages
6. The Strategy: Products and Activities
7. Pre-Testing
8. Measurement and Evaluation

Do not fall into the trap of spending lots of time and resources on developing the perfect strategy. The key is to get the right people together for the right amount of time to discuss and agree on the different components of the strategy in a logical sequence. Typically a small group of people will first meet to agree on the specific problem you want to address, your communications objectives, your target audiences, and to allocate key roles and responsibilities. One person will then write up the notes which will be reviewed by the larger group and finally agreed on. The group will then re-convene to work out the next parts, building on what's already been discussed, perhaps revising earlier parts based on new discussions and information. In total, three to four such meetings are probably needed until strategy completion.

Carrying out initial awareness raising activities, such as developing brochures and media releases, can also often help the strategy development process by helping you to think about your target audience and key messages.

3.3.1. Issue or Problem

Include a brief summary of the situation assessment made in Step 1. Also refer to any longer document you may have produced relating to the situation assessment (e.g. include as an annex).

3.3.2. Goals and Objectives

Goals tend to be over-arching while **objectives** break down these larger goals into more manageable parts.

Communication goals and objectives need to be linked to the goals and objectives of the overall project strategy. In some cases, the overall strategy will have as one of its sub-objectives one or more communications objectives.

There can be a tendency to confuse the overall project goals with your communications goals and objectives. Communication goals are primarily those that were listed in section 2.3 of this Guide. Again, these are:

- > Informing others about what your project is and does, especially its expected environmental benefits
- > Encouraging others to perform certain activities required to achieve project goals
- > Raising awareness of issues and solutions
- > Encouraging people to participate in certain activities
- > Persuading or convincing people to believe or accept new ideas or solutions
- > Changing certain behaviours among certain people
- > Educating or training people in how to apply new solutions

The important thing to ask yourself is: “Why are you using communications in your project?” Your project may, in fact, include more than one of the above communications objectives. And they often do.

Goals and objectives should be explained in three bullet points or less. They should be clear, specific and realistic, stating who will do or change what by when and by how much. If you can make your objectives clearly measurable then it will be easier for you to identify and communicate your successes with your audiences and partners.

One goal not mentioned above which should usually be addressed here is how communications will be used internally by the project, for example to improve efficiencies and synergies among project team members and avoid duplication.

If one of your goals is to try and change behaviour, see Annex 3 for a useful model on the Stages of Behaviour Change.

3.3.3. Who’s Doing the Communicating with What Resources?

In Step 1, a partial assessment was made of current available resources. At this point of the strategy, you need to be realistic about your financial resources and exactly who will implement the strategy.

You will need to start building a Communications Team to help you to develop and implement your Communications Strategy. The Team may include representatives from your partner organisations, technical specialists, or members of the community. Ideally, there should be at least one experienced person designated to ensure that communications happens right! You may also wish to contract external communications consultants.

3.3.4. Target Audiences

In Step 1, you should have determined who your target audiences are differentiating between:

- > The primary audiences you are trying to influence and;
- > Those audiences that will support your project and influence your main target audiences (the ones you are trying to change)

Include here (or in an annex) any audience research that you may have conducted that describes in more detail who your audiences are and why they think or act the way they do.

3.3.5. Main Messages

A big part of communications is deciding what you need to say.

You will need to develop a set of key messages that explains exactly why your project exists and what it is trying to achieve. But you will also need to develop clear messages that state what you want your target audiences to know, think, or do differently.

Your messages depend on who you are trying to reach and what you want the message to achieve. Ideally you need to tailor your message to meet the needs of each different target audience. This will depend on their understanding of the issue, what you want them to think or do, and the personal costs or benefits they associate with making these changes. In most cases, nobody will change anything unless they see a personal benefit or a way to avoid personal costs – whether this be financial or psychological

Everyone knows that “money talks”, which means financial benefits usually work. Unsurprisingly so does our fear of the consequences associated with breaking the law.

Make sure your messages are:

- > Consistent with and relevant to your target audiences.
- > Simple! There should only be one or two for each audience and they should be short and easy to understand.
- > Use plain language that is active, compelling, and written from the audience’s perspective.

You really need to put yourself in the shoes of the target audience and ask the question: “What’s in it for me?”

If you want your target audience to actually do something after being communicated to, then your message will need to include a “call to action”. Examples include:

- > “Use phosphate-free detergent”
- > “Compost your food scraps”
- > “Sign the new government policy”
- > “Make and implement a plan”
- > “Contact us for more information”

Create messages that help achieve your specific objective. This does not mean simply restating your goals! A winning message needs to be compelling to your target audience.

Once you have identified your main messages, make sure to use them consistently and repeatedly in all future communications.

3.3.6. The Strategy: Products and Activities

At this point, you know what you want to achieve (goals and objectives), who will do it for you (target audiences), and what messages you will send to your audiences to get them to act or think the way you want them to. Now you have to deliver the messages, through either products or activities.

The good news is – we’ve come a long way since passenger pigeons and Morse code! There are literally hundreds of products and activities now available to communicators and the list keeps getting bigger.

Again, just as you did with your Main Messages in Step 2.5 above, it’s crucial to tailor your products and activities to your target audiences. Which methods of communication are most likely to reach your target audiences? What do they now turn to for information and support? In the end you may decide on sending messages through a policy journal and local radio, but guess which one is most likely to reach a national politician and local farmer?

You need to ensure the products and activities you select are realistic given your available resources. And make sure you have a skilled communicator on board who knows how to develop and implement them!

Given your resources and objectives - what are the best ways to reach your target audience? Do you need to use mass media or do you need a megaphone?

Here are a few examples of products and activities:

Face-to-face communications

- > Home visits -- workshops, demonstrations
- > Community events – public meeting, sports event or theatrical performances
- > Traditional methods – relating issue to traditional beliefs, stories, myths, legends
- > Community groups – through schools and churches
- > Professional organizations – meetings, workplace events

Printed/publications

- > Posters
- > Flyers
- > Brochures/fact sheets
- > Newsletters
- > Direct mail
- > Telephone book
- > Directories and databases
- > Success stories!

Electronic

- > Websites
- > Email discussion lists
- > Online interactive tools
- > E-bulletins
- > Online library

Outdoor Advertising

- > Sculptures/signs in public places
- > Billboards (roadside, on buses, bus stops, at the airport)
- > Point-of-purchase materials (at the shop counter, on shopping baskets)

Media

- > Radio (especially at the community level!)
- > Newspapers
- > Television
- > Internet (government websites, email signatures)
- > Magazines
- > Video news release (VNR)
- > Journalist workshops
- > Press releases, conferences and trips
- > Story submissions

Educational (for teachers and students)

- > 'Study Packs'
- > Interactive games

Other

- > Roll-ups, displays
- > Film
- > TV or radio spots
- > Using 'champions' or 'ambassadors' who are connected to and respected by your target audiences (i.e. they represent examples your target audiences can follow)
- > Competitions and awards (e.g. which target audience can do the best job in doing what you want them to do?) (e.g. stories, photo)
- > Creative products and events
- > Grants (e.g. to local NGOs for implementing awareness-raising projects)
- > Workshops and trainings

- > Annual celebration days (e.g. Danube Day, Black Sea Day)
- > Demonstrations

More about media

Mass media can support your project's goals and influence your target audiences to think or act differently. When dealing with the media, here are some important points to keep in mind:

- > What is your news? You need to find an approach that grabs the journalist's interest. What makes your project current or relevant to their readers? Is there a conflict? What is the human side of the story? What makes it new or a headline?
- > What type of coverage do you want? (e.g. basic news, feature article, editorial, ', public service announcement).
- > Do you have a good media contact list that's up-to-date and linked to those media that will reach your target audiences?
- > Do you have any existing good relationships with the media? Or sour ones because of something from the past?
- > Be prepared! How will you respond when the media calls you? Are you ready for tough questions? Have you already worked out 'positions' or messages for the media and do you have evidence to support what you say?
- > Will you launch your project with a media-related activity (e.g. press release, conference, trip)?
- > What combination of media-related products and events will you use in the future?
- > Don't send boring information repeatedly to journalists – once they perceive you as a source of useless information, they won't even bother looking at anything you send in the future (i.e. like the boy that cried wolf).
- > Prepare 'media kits' for media – folders that include all information that may be of interest, distributed during press conferences and press trips, among other media events.
- > Designate one person in your organization to serve as the media spokesperson. All media calls should be directed to these people, and they will link journalists to the most suitable project team members, if necessary.

More about distribution

Once you've decided on what kind of products you will develop, such as brochures, folders, publications or Fact Sheets, a major question is how many you will produce. Production can be very costly, as can distribution and translation.

Imagine that a project team decides to produce a nice glossy brochure, about 50 pages long. 5000 copies sounds like a good idea. So the publications are printed, and many boxes are delivered to your office. You have a distribution list of about 100 to which you send copies. Over the next few months, you're able to distribute a few hundred more here and there. After that, about 3000 copies are shipped to the storage room in the basement. And you never know whether the publications you actually distributed had any effect or not.

This is definitely a situation to avoid! So think carefully about who you are trying to distribute to (target audiences!) and costs. A short photocopied document might actually be much more effective than a long glossy one.

Another good idea is to get help from partners for making distribution lists and in actually getting the right products into the hands of the right target audiences – not just to be placed in a pile of other documents in their office, but read with interest!

3.3.7. Pre-Testing

Why pre-test?

You have now developed drafts of the messages and products that you think will be most effective in influencing your target audiences. You have used the creativity of your Project Team, and maybe audience research, to get here.

Before 'launching' your project in the real world, you should pre-test your messages and products with a segment of your audience. This will help you assess if everything really works the way you thought it would. This process can prevent costly, and sometimes embarrassing, mistakes before it is too late!

Remember - your target audience is the expert.

What are your questions?

Pre-testing is only useful if you ask your sample audiences the right questions, linked to your earlier project goals and objectives. For example, regarding your audiences, do they:

- > Understand your message?
- > Find other meanings in your messages?
- > Prefer words or pictures?
- > Get motivated by your message?
- > Have easy access to your product or activity?
- > Find your products appealing or 'grabbing'?
- > Differ among themselves in terms of reaction (e.g. gender, age)?
- > Remember your message later?
- > Trust the messenger?
- > Have a greater understanding of an issue or solution after seeing the message?

How to pre-test

There are different methods for pre-testing. You need to choose one that's best for you. You can test individuals selected from your target audience or 'test run' your concepts with a smaller group before taking them to a wider audience.

Fundamentally, pre-testing means that you really need to listen to your target audiences and make any changes to improve the way your message is received and acted upon.

Focus groups are one of the most common methods. They can help you learn what target audience members think about all aspects of your strategy in their own words (*see Annex 2 for detailed instructions on focus groups*).

3.4. Step 3: Implement, Monitor and Evaluate Strategy

3.4.1. Implement Strategy

At this stage, you have developed a strategy and have possibly pre-tested it, to see that it has the right impact on your sample target audiences. If the pre-testing showed some gaps or weaknesses, you should have revised your strategy. You may choose to pre-test again following your revisions.

Before strategy implementation, it's ideal to create some kind of a 'Work Plan' or 'Action Plan'. Such a Plan should show who will implement the products and activities listed in the strategy, as well as when, where and how. A table format could be useful here, with vertical columns with headings such as 'Task', 'Person Responsible' and 'Date'.

With your strategy, pre-testing and Work Plan finalized, it's time for you to implement. Good luck!

3.4.2. Monitor and Evaluate Implementation

Evaluation provides an opportunity to find out if your hard work has really made a difference. By assessing what does and doesn't work, you will use lessons learned to improve your efforts in the future. You will also be able to show your Project Team, partners and funders exactly what has been achieved.

The main question here is: Did your project achieve what it originally set out to do? You must therefore go back to your original communication goals and objectives and use them to inform your indicators of progress. Some examples could be:

- > Has the issue been communicated properly?
- > Was awareness raised?
- > Are behaviours being changed?
- > Have you been able to motivate others to take required actions?

It's important to note that monitoring should be done throughout the entire project, as well as at the end. Effective monitoring involves keeping on top of project activities and making sure that implementation is on the right path towards achieving your project goals. During the project, monitoring might reveal that your strategy is not working – that means you may need to change your strategy during project implementation.

Be flexible! Don't ever think that a strategy is final and needs to be followed at all costs. It's a tool to help you get results, and if results aren't coming in, then the tool might need to be changed.

It's also important that your system of monitoring and evaluation is planned from the start, so you know exactly what to assess right from the beginning.

How to monitor

Once you know what you are monitoring (e.g. awareness, behaviour change, people taking action), there are a number of ways how to monitor or measure progress. Many of the methods are the same as those suggested under 'Step 1.3 Target Audiences' of this Guide.

The important thing is to make sure you ask the right questions for the right people. If you want to know whether your activities are helping farmers to become more aware of the pollution they produce, then you need to ask them. The same goes for assessing whether your campaign has helped local residents to reduce the volume of waste they produce. You need to make sure that the results you are seeing are directly linked to your project. Your target audiences may be changing the way you want them to, but maybe your project has nothing to do with it! Maybe they are doing it because of a change that has occurred elsewhere such as a new law or an economic downturn.

Examples of monitoring

- > Using audience research to measure changes in awareness, attitudes, and behaviour.
- > Did the communications contribute towards the development of new policy or passing a new law?
- > How many people participated in campaign events or competitions?
- > How many public enquiries or requests for information were generated
- > How many people were reached through the media? How many were target audience members?
- > How many media stories appeared as a result of a campaign?
- > How many materials were handed or sent out to the primary audience?
- > How many partners were engaged in distributing campaign messages?
- > Were all activities carried out on budget and according to the timeline? If not, why not?
- > Did access to environmental information improve?
- > Asking callers how they found out about your project
- > Counting the number of brochures that have been given out etc

Environmental impacts

Your goals may have included direct environmental impacts. In some cases, there may be simple and direct ways to measure such impacts such as looking at the amount of rubbish households put out before and after the project. However, with many environmental issues, it is often difficult to measure immediate effects – for example, reducing pollution from

agriculture. It may take years or even decades to achieve environmental goals while your project may be ending soon.

You may then need to include assumptions and future scenarios in your monitoring and evaluation. For example, you could argue that, based on the changes in perception caused through your project's communications activities, you expect the actions of your target audiences to change in the future, and this will lead to a more favourable environmental condition.

Success Stories

During your monitoring efforts, you will hopefully uncover a number of successes as the project moves along. While these can tell you a lot about how the project is doing, they can also be packaged into excellent success stories. Such positive, simple and descriptive stories are great tools for communicating to target audiences, project partners and donors... and often lead the way to more success stories! They can also be incredibly useful in generating media attention, gaining more volunteers or additional support for your project.

Final Report

It is vital that you prepare a Final Report to show your Project Team, partners and donors what you have achieved with the implementation of your Communications Strategy. This report will also be useful for you in planning any next stage or strategy of your project or programme.

The report should basically state whether the goals and objectives of your Communications Strategy were achieved or not, as well as why and how. It should explain how monitoring was used to make your evaluation, as well as lessons learned and recommendations for how planning and implementation might have been improved.

4. CASE STUDIES IN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

Case studies follow on how two GEW IW projects were able to effectively use communications as a project tool. They are for the South Pacific Project and the Danube Regional Project.

4.1. The International Waters Project of the Pacific Islands

- Using Communications to Change Behaviour

The Pacific International Waters Project (IWP) is working to strengthen the management of waste, freshwater and coastal fisheries in 14 Pacific island nations. The project is being implemented by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, which is based in Apia, Samoa.

After centuries of subsistence living, the rapid growth of populations and cash-based economies, has led to increasing pollution and declining coastal fisheries in the small, fragile islands of the Pacific. However, most of these small island developing states simply do not have the economic resources to provide effective environmental management services to their communities.

The Pacific International Waters Project was designed to help government agencies find cost-effective ways to help strengthen the community-based management of critical resources such as freshwater and near-shore fisheries. Strategic communications has played a critical role in raising awareness of environmental problems and in promoting the need for communities to adopt new behaviours to protect their fragile resources.

In order to encourage people to act in new ways it helps if they understand how they will benefit if they change their current behaviours. In many Pacific communities a major barrier to change is that many people simply do not understand the relationship between issues such as increasing waste and resource degradation. For example, in Kiribati's Kiritimati (Christmas) Island, people didn't believe there was a connection between their pit toilets and polluted groundwater. After a red vegetable dye was poured into one of the toilets they were shocked when they saw a pink colour starting to appear in one of their wells.

Narua Lovai, National Coordinator for the Papua New Guinea IWP, says it proved very difficult for people from the pilot village of Barakau to understand the linkage between their waste, health problems, and declining coastal fisheries. "Many people still blame sickness and death on sorcery. It took two years before the village agreed to introduce measures to ban drop toilets and pig-pens from sensitive shoreline areas," he says.

At the start of the Pacific IWP a Communications Specialist was employed by the Project's Coordination Unit to help the 14 National Coordinators to develop and implement their own communications strategies. The communications planning process greatly assisted many of the National Coordinators to clarify their objectives and target audiences and build much stronger relationships with their partners and stakeholders. They were able to use this planning process to improve their understanding of their target audiences, and determine the most cost-effective ways to raise awareness, promote new behaviours, and improve environmental indicators.

The Pacific IWP's communications programme placed a great deal of emphasis on "learning by doing". While good planning is vital it was also very important to quickly develop tangible "products" such as articles, brochures, and videos to help get immediate buy-in from the community and national stakeholders. Those National Coordinators that successfully developed their own strategies were also able to implement their own ongoing communications programmes with minimal guidance and supervision from the Communications Specialist.

A Communications Awards programme was also designed to promote and share best practice in areas such as "Best Communications Strategy" and "Best Use of Video".

The most successful projects also encouraged a team approach by involving key stakeholders as members of their Communications or Campaign Teams at the earliest possible time. These projects used practical audience research techniques to determine:

- > What to say;
- > How to say it and;
- > Whether their communications had the desired impact.

This also helped these projects to take a staged approach to their communications programmes by selecting achievable targets and focusing on simple messages and specific behaviors.

The first phase of communications activities focused on using media activities to raise greater awareness of the problems, the project approach, and the possible solutions and benefits at the community and national levels. The IWP's media outreach programme involved contracting journalists from the participating countries to write feature articles, radio programmes and television items. Every effort was made to use communications resources from within the Pacific Islands region – from journalists to filmmakers - in a conscious effort to build communications skills, experience, and capacity in the area of environmental communications. The success of this programme culminated in the IWP sponsoring the Pacific regions first environmental journalism awards in 2006.

With the support of the United Nations the project also commissioned a photographer to visit key project locations in an effort to personalise the problems and "champion" the people that were trying to address them. This small activity had a powerful impact in terms of raising awareness of the issues of pollution and declining coastal resources at the community and government levels. The photographs proved to be invaluable in the development of other media tools such as posters, articles, public displays.

The following examples show how a range of strategic communications tools and activities have been used to help achieve project objectives.

1. Championing waste management in Fiji

One of the most successful communications initiatives in the Pacific IWP was a programme designed specifically to identify and promote environmental "Champions" at the community, national and regional levels. Promoting individual "Champions" helped to personalise the issue for a wider audience and highlight what people could actually do to address problems such as pollution and declining fisheries.

Pita Vatucawaqa, the Chair of the Environment Committee from Fiji's pilot community of Vunisinu, was one of the IWP's most successful Champions. From the beginning of the project Pita was very passionate about finding ways to improve the management of waste in the

village. He took a lead role in village workshops, was instrumental in establishing a new waste management system, and even built his own composting toilet.

The key to his success as a Champion was that he was also very articulate in explaining the problem and the possible solutions to a range of audiences. Popular with journalists, Pita featured in radio programmes, television items, newspaper articles, websites, and even in training materials. Pita is continuing to work with the Fiji Government to promote waste reduction throughout the rest of the Rewa Province.

2. Using drama to model new behaviours in Vanuatu

In Vanuatu the IWP trained 30 community facilitators to try and find ways to improve the management of coastal fisheries – particularly the land crab – in the community of Crab Bay on Malekula Island.

Training in monitoring helped the facilitators improve the management of this “signal” resource through the use of tools such as taboo areas, size limits, and market quotas. However, the project needed to find an effective way to communicate these new management tools and behaviours to the wider community. The project facilitators worked with a well-known local theatre company, Wan Smolbag, to develop and performed a popular drama to help raise awareness of the problem and exactly what the community needed to do if it wanted to preserve its declining fisheries resources.

The IWP facilitators are now seen as “Champions” and advocates of resource management and they have been invited to explain their successes to other communities. Leah Nimoho, National Coordinator for the Vanuatu IWP, says the key to delivering an effective communications programme is recognising the need to promote clear benefits. “To be effective any communications programme must be designed to help local stakeholders understand the problems, create a sense of ownership over the solutions, and motivate ongoing participation in management activities,” she says.

3. Taking a step-by-step approach to reduce waste in Kiribati

The biodegradable Greenbag had already been promoted by an NGO as a potential tool to encourage people to keep their organics out of the country’s new landfills. After assessing the existing situation the Kiribati IWP realised that it would have the biggest impact on reducing waste by encouraging the public and councils to adopt the Greenbag as a key waste minimisation tool.

The project set a target of achieving a 20% reduction in the volume of waste generated by the pilot community by the end of 2006. By the end of 2005 it had achieved a 50% reduction in waste volumes - a full year ahead of schedule.

The project employed a series of tools to promote the Greenbag including: community competitions, posters, radio jingles, talkback, community theatre, project videos, and community “champions”. At the end of one Greenbag competition more than 10 tonnes inorganic waste had been removed from the pilot community. This built pride and confidence amongst the community and the sight of stacks of Greenbags during the competition raised curiosity from the neighbouring villages.

In order to build on its success at the community level the project began to lobby the local councils to adopt the Greenbag scheme as the basis of a new and more efficient user-pays system for the entire country. There has now been a great jump in the use of the Greenbag throughout the capital atoll of South Tarawa - from 3% in October 2004 to 17% December 2005.

One year before project completion the Greenbag looks set to become a central tool in the country's fight against waste.

In the Pacific IWP there have been 4 keys to successful communications:

1. Find ways to help people understand the personal benefits of changing their current behaviours.
2. Keep messages simple.
3. Make it clear what you want people to do differently.
4. Start small and build on your successes with a wider audience.

4.2. Danube Regional Project

From the start! Communicating strategically

Right from the start of the Danube Regional Project (DRP), the Project Manager and Project Team knew that it was crucial to incorporate communications as a key project tool that would assist in meeting project objectives. For this reason, they started the work to develop a Communications Strategy for the entire project.

The early stages of development were geared to determining how communications could be used as a project tool, and how to communicate what the DRP is and does. This second goal was linked to DRP being a very complex project. It included some 80 technical 'sub-projects' for a range of themes from agriculture to wetlands to river basin management, and 130 grants for NGOs. It worked with 13 countries in the most international river basin in the world. The Danube's ecological impacts on the Black Sea made the DRP one of three components of the larger \$95 million 'GEF Strategic Partnership'. And numerous partners and players were involved. Simplifying what the project did was crucial.

Fortunately, an upcoming GEF IW conference forced the team to do some quick thinking and prepare some simple messages. The result was breaking down the complex project into six key activities: reduce nutrient pollution, reduce toxic pollution, improve water services, strengthen agricultural policy, provide river basin management (RBM) tools and protect wetlands.

Strategic approach

A second decision was that thinking strategically about communications meant using a consistent strategic approach. This included the identification of communications goals, target

audiences, main messages, delivery vehicles (i.e. communications products and activities) and a monitoring and evaluation system. This approach would be used to develop the overall DRP Communications Strategy as well as sub-strategies for technical projects and grants (where possible and economical).

Four goals were chosen for the overall DRP Communications Strategy:

1. Increased stakeholder awareness of the DRP, its six key goals and activities.
2. Focus on one of the six goals - reducing nutrient pollution from agriculture.
3. Increase public awareness about the "big Danube picture" – there was poor awareness about what a basin or nutrient pollution are, or how major institutions and laws could help environmental improvements.
4. Internal communications support would help select DRP sub-projects.

Getting the wheels in motion

To reach the goals, the project had experienced communications staff that understood both communications and environmental issues. Related to the first goal, wheels were set in motion to quickly develop basic products for communicating what the DRP does. This included a new visual identity and strap-line for the project, brochures, website and powerpoint presentations. A brilliant UN photographer was also commissioned to take thousands of excellent photos from throughout the Danube River Basin, from dams to sunsets to its diverse peoples.

Activities related to the third goal of raising public awareness included the writing and submission of stories about the Danube for international environmental journals.

Working with target audiences

Target audiences identified by the Communications Strategy were assisted in multiple ways through communications. One was the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR), the body mandated with implementing the Danube River Protection Convention through multi-country cooperation.

The ICPDR magazine 'Danube Watch' received financial support, technical help in redesigning its structure, and numerous story submissions. International Danube Day, coordinated by the ICPDR, and its associated international art competition were supported. ICPDR publications and materials received funding. ICPDR staff also received capacity-building for strategic communications and media products.

Another target was the Danube Environmental Forum (DEF), a network of 174 Danube NGOs whose creation was significantly assisted by the GEF. It received strategic communications support in planning and implementing local and international campaigns, its own visual identity and branding, media outreach and publication production. DEF NGOs that received DRP financial grants were also assisted in developing communications strategies for their projects.

Working with Project Managers

The Strategy goal four, providing internal communications support, had to be selective given the large number of DRP sub-projects. After developing selection criteria and numerous internal discussions, a select number of sub-projects were chosen for targeted support. Examples of these included sub-projects dealing with: wetland protection, improving municipal wastewater treatment facilities, river basin management, public access to environmental information, regional trans-boundary NGO grants, and agricultural pollution (remember, this last one was always a key target for the Communications Strategy!).

Focus on farming

The agricultural component of the DRP was considered most important, technically speaking. Audiences to be communicated to, or 'beneficiaries', included farmers, farming advisors, NGOs with DRP grants geared to reducing pollution from agriculture, and federal agricultural ministries.

Phase I products developed by the contracted project manager were seen as quite thick and technical. In response, there was a need to identify the key news and tools 'buried' in these reports such as new information, recommendations and partnerships that had been created. These news and tools were then re-packaged and widely disseminated through Fact Sheets, stories and the media, to encourage maximum use and application by the targeted beneficiaries. This included, for example, a list of best agricultural practices that could be used by farmers to reduce their nutrient and toxic pollution loads to local water bodies in the Danube Basin.

Phase II involved close collaboration between the contracted project manager and DRP communications staff in developing and implementing a Communications Strategy solely for this component. Target audiences were identified, main messages were created, and a number of communications products and activities were agreed on. These included workshops, presentations, press releases and other media support, flying project beneficiaries to an agricultural fair abroad, and trainings, among others.

"I've never been in a UN project before that was able to apply strategic communications so effectively through all levels," said one DRP communications specialist. "It was taken seriously right from the start and many top and sub-project managers were trained to apply strategic communications in their everyday work. In the end, there was a clear realization by all that having used communications was absolutely necessary to reaching the goals of pollution reduction by the project."

5. LAST WORDS

Hopefully this Guide has provided you with some new insights about:

- > the importance of using communications in your project;
- > planning communications from the start, and;
- > how to develop and evaluate a Communications Strategy.

With careful planning and implementation you'll soon begin to recognize how effective communications can help to achieve your project goals. You may even have a project already in motion that includes communications tasks but until now had no communications strategy built in – if that's the case, please start using this Guide now!

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Key inputs into the development of this Guide came from:

- > Kari Eik, Project Implementation and Communication Specialist, Danube Regional Project
- > Paul Csagoly, Communications Expert, Danube Regional Project
- > Steve Menzies, Communications Specialist, International Waters Project of the Pacific Islands

The development of this Guide was agreed during a two-day communication workshop held in Vienna on 19-20 January 2006. Its goal was to find an effective way for GEF IW projects to share best practices and lessons learned in communications. The workshop included the following projects and people:

UNDP/GEF Danube Regional Project

- > Ivan Zavadsky, Regional Programme Director Danube – Black Sea
- > Kari Eik, Project Implementation & Communication Specialist
- > Paul Csagoly, Communications Expert
- > Sylvia Koch, Administration

International Waters Project of the Pacific Islands

- > Steve Menzies, Communications Specialist
- > Ritia Bakineti, National Coordinator, Kiribati IWP
- > Leah Nimoho, National Coordinator, Vanuatu IWP
- > Deyna Marsh, Assistant National Coordinator, Cook Islands IWP

Caspian Environment Programme (CEP)

- > Hamidreza Ghaffarzadeh, Project Manager
- > Melina Seyfollahzadeh, Grants and Public Participation Manager
- > Ardalan Sotoudeh, Information Technology Assistant

Black Sea Ecosystem Recovery Project (BSERP)

- > Georgy Volovik, PIU Manager

Regional Organization for Conservation of the Environment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (PERSGA)

- > Khulood Tubaishat, Adviser

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- > Mary Matthews, Public Involvement Expert

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ICPDR

- > Jasmine Bachmann

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- > Magdi Toth Nagy

Workshop Facilitator

- > Tony Hare, Tony Hare Communication

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Social Marketing in the Pacific: A Project Planning Guide, by Steve Menzies (April 2004)

The following handbooks developed by the AIDSCAP Behavior Change Communication Unit are available online at: <http://www.fhi.org/en/HIVAIDS/pub/guide/BCC+Handbooks/index.htm> :

- How to Create an Effective Communication Project
- Behavior Change Through Mass Communication
- How to Conduct Effective Pretests
- Partnership with the Media
- Policy and Advocacy Work on HIV/AIDS Prevention
- Assessment and Monitoring of Behavior Change Communication (BCC) Interventions

8. ANNEXES

Annex 1 - Working with Outside Consultants

A Project may not have sufficient staff resources in the Communications Team to carry out all of the required communication tasks. In this case, outside consultants may be brought in to provide specific services.

Typical areas of activity which may involve outside consultants include:

- > Design of printed and electronic materials (leaflets, brochures, posters, website etc.)
- > Copywriting for printed and electronic materials
- > Logo and identity design
- > Media work (PR, production of press releases, story placement, article writing etc)
- > Event organisation
- > Target audience research
- >

The most important aspects of successful interventions by external communication consultants are:

- > Effective **briefing**; and
- > Effective **management**

Briefing

By ensuring that the outside consultant is fully and accurately briefed, the Project Manager can avoid the difficulties that sometimes arise with outside consultants. Effective briefing ensures that the consultant understands:

- > The background to the communication task
- > The (achievable and measurable) communications objectives
- > The Project's expectations
- > The timeline, implementation schedule and budget
- > The management of the work

With this understanding, it is much less likely that the work will run over time, over budget, or fail to produce what is required.

A sample brief (for the integrated visual identity of the Black Sea Ecosystem Recovery Programme) is [Appendix X] to this Guide. Although it refers to a particular communication task, it can easily be adapted for use in other tasks.

Certain key elements are always very useful to include within a brief. The following elements are included within the attached example of a brief (Appendix X).

Background

Briefly inform the supplier about the Project (web-links are useful to avoid making the Background too long).

Inform the consultant about the communication task and the reasons for carrying it out.

Background materials can be divided for convenience if required (for example, in the sample brief [Appendix X] the Background is divided into a general Background and some more specific background on visual identity).

Existing materials

The consultant should be provided with existing materials – this helps them get a 'feel' for the Project and demonstrates the style and approach used to date.

Core values and tone of voice

The core values are those values which are central to the Project – for example commitment to stakeholder involvement, cross-boundary relevance, and environmental improvement.

The consultant needs to understand the core values of the Project to produce appropriate materials.

The tone of voice refers to the style ('feel') of the materials, especially written materials. So it is possible to use words and phrases such as 'dynamic', 'professional', 'expert', 'popular', 'community-oriented', etc.

The brief

The actual nature of the finished product is stated simply here.

Materials: technical requirements

This covers the technical requirements the consultant must meet, for example the electronic formats.

A Project Manager may not feel confident to state all of these, and in such a case, it is acceptable practice to ask the consultant to state and explain the technical requirements as they see them.

Applications

This states the uses to which the work will be put. In the sample brief [Appendix X] a wide range of applications is stated, ranging from letterheads to PowerPoint templates. Clearly applications will vary from brief to brief.

Production

The production aspects of the work may be handled by the Project or by the consultant. In the latter case, this section can simply be used to inform the consultant that production aspects of the work need to be carried out cost-effectively.

Timescale

Stating the timescale clearly at the briefing stage helps to ensure that the work runs to schedule – any over-run would be the responsibility of the consultant.

Project management

Effective management is vital. It begins with the Project Manager's clarification of responsibilities within the team, including the person who will lead on managing the consultant.

Subsequent steps in successful management may include:

- > Team meeting to clarify the nature of the communication work, its contribution to the Project Objectives and what it is expected to deliver
- > Drawing up of the brief
- > Circulation of the brief to a small number (usually 2-4) of potential suppliers
- > Interviewing the potential consultants
- > Selecting and appointing the successful consultants
- > Managing the relationship with the consultants during the course of the work.

Note that the sample brief Annex 4 includes some useful questions under the heading 'Project management'. These help to ensure that the management arrangements (and the allocation of tasks within the consultant team) are clear from the start.

Annex 2: Running Your Own Focus Group

Finding suitable participants

Focus groups usually involve 8 to 10 people but can be as small as 5 to 6. The group should include people who are similar to each other in ways that match your target audience. You should carry out two or three focus groups with each target group.

You could advertise for participants, get referrals from other groups or contact them directly. Avoid only getting people who feel strongly about the issue. The best way to make sure you are selecting suitable members is to first ask them related questions or to fill out a short questionnaire.

Make it as easy as possible for participants to attend and provide incentives if possible. Don't tell them too much about what they will be discussing in advance. You might just say, "You will be participating in group discussion about environmental issues" or "We want your advice on some materials we are developing for a new education campaign."

Tips for running Focus Groups

Develop a 'Topic Guide' with no more than 8 to 12 key questions that you need to address.

Focus groups should last no more than 1.5 to 2 hours. They should be held in a neutral and comfortable setting with as few distractions as possible. Have one assistant keep notes and assist with organization so the facilitator can focus on asking the questions.

Get people there 10 to 15 minutes before the start time. It's important that people get personally welcomed (i.e. they aren't left standing around feeling unimportant) and that they meet the group facilitator early.

Use name tags for everyone. This provides a feeling of friendship and makes it more likely that people will relax and share information. For respondents, having the facilitator use their names gives them a good feeling and a greater sense of involvement. The spacing and format of seats can also be very important.

Introduce yourself as the Facilitator – who you are, where you're from and what your role is. Say your role is neutral and that you aren't allowed to have opinions. Make some personal disclosure – not intimate details of your life but things like interests and goals. This helps respondents to 'bond' with you and gives them an idea of what they should say about themselves. Don't say anything about yourself that could alienate participants (e.g. with low-income participants, don't say you love frequent plane travel!).

Ask people to introduce themselves. Afterwards, say something like "it's nice to know a bit about each other before we start our discussion." This encourages people to relax and sets up an informal atmosphere.

Confirm the purpose of the group. Remember, you know what's coming in the discussion, they don't and some people may feel it is a bit like having a test at school – anything that you as the facilitator can do to reduce anxiety will enhance your chances of getting better quality information.

Tell people how long the session will last, and ensure this will not be a problem for anyone (hopefully they have already been told of anticipated duration).

Right from the outset of a focus group, adopt a 'listening' rather than a 'questioning' approach. Start with general issues and use your topic guide to make sure you cover the issues you need to discuss. Questions do not need to be followed in order if the discussion naturally leads to a different topic, but everything should be covered eventually.

Emphasise the importance of one person talking at a time to make it easier for the note-taker. Although you may also want to record the focus group on audio or video.

The best focus groups are where respondents exchange views and discuss the topic without too much direction from the facilitator. As a facilitator, you need to draw people out to engage with one another.

Emphasise that there are no 'wrong' answers or need to 'agree' with other group members. However, people do need to respect each other's viewpoints and they should not put other ideas down. Ask open-ended questions – ones that cannot be answered with just a YES or a NO but rather begin with: How? What? Why?

Don't hold a guide, pens and paper when running the group. This can make people feel like they are being judged, or that you are more interested in your role than in them. It may also suggest you are nervous or inexperienced and some members may take advantage of that.

When getting people to use their imaginations and visualise, talk them through every step of the 'fantasy' and get them to jot down what they saw or felt or thought. Then have them report back to the group. This lessens the chances of their simply agreeing with what the last person said.

Participants will have many different attitudes and prejudices. Don't ignore these -- work with them. Just say: "We seem to have a difference of opinion here. Let's talk about it together." Then let the group discuss it.

When a group is interacting well and you hear a chance remark that sounds like it could be interesting, don't immediately pounce on the person making the remark. Wait until the conversation subsides and then say: "Sally you were saying something earlier about what was that ...?"

Try to leave a few minutes at the end of the group for last remarks, recapping what has been said, and allowing each member to have a last say. At the end, thank members and emphasise how useful the session has been. Keep your ears open at this stage -- often very choice tidbits of information get dropped at the very end of the group after people think the 'real' discussion is over!

Analysis of Focus Groups

After the focus group, you should go over the discussion with your assistant to identify any "big ideas" that emerged and to confirm that your understandings of what happened match each other. You might wish to make notes of your immediate impressions while still fresh in your mind.

Note the words that people used to talk about issues, particularly if they tended to use different words than you did. Pay attention to key points made by the group as a whole and compare the main ideas that emerged across all the focus groups to identify similarities and differences. Look for trends and strongly or frequently held opinions.

Try to remember when there were sounds of agreement or disagreement in the group that did not get written down – for example, if someone made an important remark and everyone agreed non-verbally.

Comments that are specific and based on someone’s own personal experience should be given more weight than those that are more general.

Don’t feel as if you have to act on all the suggestions they provided you. Sometimes they might be unrealistic given your resources, or they might just be bad ideas that don’t fit with what you are really trying to achieve.

Group the feedback you received into different topics such as “message concepts” and “visual design”. In each topic, label each idea as “definitely change,” “possibly change” or “do not change”.

**Adapted from "Tips for Running Focus Groups" supplied by Jude Varcoe and Kerry Foley from TNS Research, Wellington, NZ.*

Suggested Focus Group Work Plan

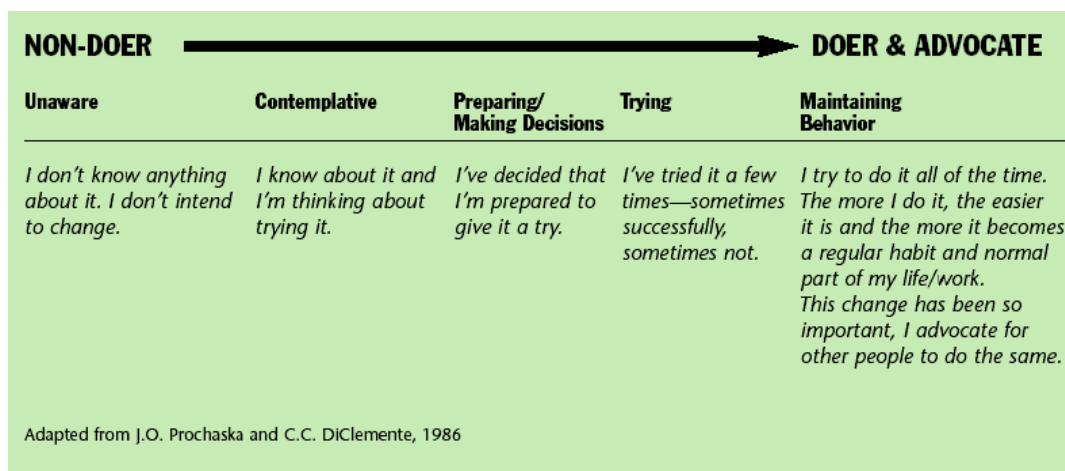
Activity	Who	Deadline
Develop topic guide		
Locate facility		
Set dates/times of group		
Select/train facilitators		
Recruit participants		
Confirm attendance with participants		
Conduct focus groups		
Transcribe tapes/write up notes		
Analyze results		
Write report		

Annex 3: The Stages of Behaviour Change Model






While some people are quick to try new things, others are more resistant to change. Targeting those most likely to change is often the most cost effective way to promote the same change among a larger group. Here, using the “Stages of Change” model developed by Prochaska and DiClemente (1986) might be of use to you.

The following diagram illustrates the process of moving from being a “non-doer” to being someone who could help to make a change more acceptable for a wider group. In this model, six stages are referred to:

1. <i>Unaware</i>	People have no idea they have a problem, so they have no intention of changing
2. <i>Contemplating</i>	People are aware there is a problem and begin to consider whether they can take any action
3. <i>Preparing</i>	People intend to take action soon and make plans to do so
4. <i>Trying</i>	People start changing but not all the time
5. <i>Maintenance</i>	People continue the change
6. <i>Advocacy</i>	People encourage and show others how to adopt the change



People need different kinds of messages, materials, training, and support for each stage. For example, people who are unaware that their behaviour is harmful or damaging to the environment may need better information from sources they trust. Others who are thinking about trying a new behaviour may need social support and skills training. As an example, the following table looks at the different approaches that might be required to encourage people to compost their organic waste:

Stage of behaviour change	Attitudes	Behavior	Possible communications approach for this stage
Advocacy 	'I show others how to do it'	I show my neighbours and friends how to compost	We need to work with these "advocates" to help spread the behaviour to the wider community
Maintaining 	'I do it all the time'	I always put organic waste (waste that can decompose) in the compost.	We need to compliment doers & reinforce the long-term benefits of the action.
Trying 	'I do it most of the time'	Sometimes put organic waste in the compost and sometimes put it in the rubbish bin. Trying to increase use of compost.	We need to provide support and assistance to make sure they can do the action easily.
Contemplating 	'I'm thinking about it'	Throw organic waste in the rubbish bin and feel bad about it and have been thinking about composting.	We need to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduce barriers/costs - Increase perceived benefits - Make the behaviour acceptable
Unaware stage 	'I know nothing/ am not concerned about it'	Throw organic waste in the rubbish and don't even think about it	We need to provide education

Unfortunately the process of behaviour change is almost never that simple and straightforward. People love trying things out, giving them up, and trying them again, before making them a "normal" part of everyday life.

Change can spread, slowly at first, before reaching a "tipping" point where the rest of the community adopts it and it becomes a "social norm". However, you need to accept that it always takes time to create a new social norm. It is likely that your project will require an ongoing effort to repeat, reinforce and maintain the new behaviour.

Annex 4 - Framework for Identity Brief (example)

Background - general

The Black Sea Ecosystem Recovery Project (BSERP) has been developed under the auspices of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) International Waters (IW) Program, and is implemented by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

It works to facilitate the recovery of the Black Sea ecosystem. See: <http://www.blacksea-environment.org> and http://www.gpa.unep.org/meetings/black_sea/Background%20documents/BSERP_Implementation_Plan.pdf

The BSERP ensures the provision of a suite of harmonised legal and policy instruments for tackling the problem of eutrophication in the Black Sea - and the release of hazardous substances. An important feature of the project is its encouragement of broad stakeholder participation.

The Black Sea coastal zone is densely populated, with approximately 16 million inhabitants and with 4 million tourists visiting the seacoast in summer seasons. The countries bordering the Black Sea are:

- > Bulgaria
- > Georgia
- > Romania
- > Russian Federation
- > Turkey
- > Ukraine

As the website states:

"Failure to tackle the problem of eutrophication in a holistic manner would severely constrain future development in the region. Activities such as tourism development, fisheries, public health, are intimately related to the quality of shared marine waters. Resolving the problem is not merely a matter of reducing the discharge of nutrients, but involves protective measures to help vital ecosystems to become re-established, fisheries and other living resources to be exploited in a sustainable manner and chemical contamination to be strictly controlled.

"The present project adopts the necessary integrated strategy and is a vital component in the wider GEF Black Sea Basin Strategic Partnership that includes separate GEF interventions in the Danube and the Dnipro, a number of biodiversity projects and the World Bank GEF Nutrient Investment Facility (to provide the necessary support for key investment actions)."

The Black Sea Ecosystem Recovery Project works closely with the Black Sea Commission (BSC - www.blacksea-commission.org), also known as the Commission for the Protection of the Black Sea, the body which implements the Convention for the Protection of the Black Sea (the Bucharest Convention), which has been signed by all six of the Black Sea countries.

Background – visual identity

It is necessary for BSERP to integrate and clarify its visual branding. This is part of a suite of activities designed to enhance the organisation's profile.

The branding must be robust. This is true in four important contexts:

- > Financially – there is an ongoing output from BSERP, in the form of interventions around policy, legislation, community involvement etc. These may take the form of reports, brochures, web updates, conference packs, folders etc.
- > It is important that the implementation of BSERP's visual branding is made as cost-effective as possible and that it can be cost-effectively applied on an ongoing basis.
- > Practically – for the same reasons as above: the branding needs to be easily implemented across a wide range of communication products.
- > As an international project, BSERP must be able to communicate effectively across a wide range of communities and stakeholders.
- > Many aspects of BSERP's work are carried out in partnership with other stakeholders, and it is important that the visual branding can accommodate partners' icons and logos.

Existing identity

There is a range of visual materials, but there is currently no integrated visual identity.

Core values and tone of voice

The core values centre on the Project's critical task of enabling the recovery of the Black Sea ecosystem.

More particularly, the task and core values include:

- > Approaching the problems of eutrophication in a holistic manner.
- > Developing protective measures to help vital ecosystems to become re-established, and fisheries and other living resources to be exploited in a sustainable manner.
- > Assisting the Black Sea countries to:
 - Reduce nitrogen and phosphorus loading in the Black Sea
 - Enhance the service function of wetlands and benthic (seabed) plant communities for the assimilation of nutrients
 - Improve management of critical habitats to permit economic recovery of fisheries in parallel with improvements to the ecosystem
 - Reduce transboundary contamination by hazardous substances, particularly where these have similar sources to nutrients.
- > Providing harmonised legal and policy instruments across the Black Sea countries.
- > Encouraging broad stakeholder participation.

The tone of voice is at once professional, international, influential, powerful and involving, concerned and community-oriented.

The brief

Generation of a flexible, robust cost-effective visual identity, applicable to a wide variety of hard copy and electronic applications.

Materials: technical requirements

- > Work where relevant in PMS, CMYK, RGB/HEX and mono formats as vector [Adobe Illustrator .eps].
- > Work where relevant in JPEG and .BMP for Mac and PC to cover print, WP and screen-based uses

Applications

Some of the applications will be internal, and some external:

- > Templates [Project Manager to specify software]
- > Letterhead with letter style
- > Fax sheet
- > Invoice
- > Memo
- > Purchase order
- > Report title page
- > Report text page
- > Report cover page
- > Folder cover page/printed folders that can be overprinted with specific information
- > Folder inserts
- > PowerPoint title and text frames
- > Business cards
- > (At this stage, not the website: but that will follow, and needs to be borne in mind when creating the core identity)
- > More?

Production

You will need to have value-for-money, reliable production suppliers.

Timescale

- > (Date set for choosing design consultancy)
- > (Any key dates presentations / applications need to hit)

Project management

The work will be led by BS Communication Expert in partnership with BSERP and invited consultants. The Communication Expert will lead the interview, review and decision process, and will thereafter be the primary contact for the progression of work associated with the ongoing implementation of the visual branding.

In preparing your proposals, please let us know:

- > What your working method would be for the project
- > Who would be our primary contact at your agency for the initial and ongoing work
- > Who at your agency would be actually doing the work
- > Which of your costs are fixed costs and which are variable
- > What are your terms of business
- > Your proposed schedule
- > Some background information about your design practice and an account of relevant experience

BRIEF ENDS

Annex 5 - Some Lessons Learned from GEF IW Projects

We'll end the Guide with some key lessons learned by GEF IW projects across the globe. Hopefully, you'll be able to add your own to the list soon.

A number of experiences related to communications were shared among GEF IW project managers during the January 2006 workshop held in Vienna, Austria. One point that became clear is that communications are being used for many different reasons in many different places across the world. Despite these differences, however, there were some clear lessons learned, both positive and negative, that can be applied to different projects and settings. The following is a summary of some of these lessons learned.

Because of communications, the following project wins resulted:

- > The project was better understood externally.
- > Solutions promoted by 'champions' through the media "put a face" to the project's solutions.
- > An international network of national communications and public participation focal points was created to implement actions, and national coordinators were coached to improve their communications.
- > Household waste dropped by 60% which meant there was reduced organic waste headed for the local landfill and government savings.
- > Countries increased international dialogue on environmental issues.
- > Pilot demonstration projects were effective in delivering positive messages.
- > The project website was increasingly used by target audiences.
- > The project was there long enough for wins to happen.
- > Sub-project managers were encouraged to use strategic communications.
- > Teachers and NGOs cooperated with each other across boundaries.
- >

The following were seen as barriers or weaknesses to communications:

- > Communications was not planned into the project early enough.
- > Behaviour change as a goal takes time so a long project timeline is needed.
- > Insufficient budgets cause serious constraints.
- > Data is not always easily accessible (e.g. from private companies or governments).
- > Advanced information technologies often do not exist in developing areas.
- > The project was too 'top-down' without enough local interaction.
- > A GEF communications and public participation strategy template would be useful (now in process).
- > It is difficult to communicate in a "formalistic culture" where people don't believe in the need to disseminate information or to have public participation.

- > Many people either lack trust in their government, or believe that the government should do all.
- > There is a lack of people with good communications experience and it takes time to train inexperienced people.
- > Evaluating the effectiveness of using communications is often the most difficult step.
- > A context with multiple cultures and languages makes communications more complex.
- > English is over-used without sufficient translation.
- > Projects need to better receive and respect target audience feedback.
- > It is not easy to spark interest for issues such as "nutrient pollution", "access to information" or "trans-boundary cooperation".
- > Too many opinions in developing a strategy can result in no strategy.
- > Communications need to be coordinated among project team members.
- > There are universal problems but no universal tools or fixes.
- > A project needs to consider whether or not it wishes to become an "information clearinghouse" (i.e. one-stop-shop for all related information).
- > It is easier to develop a communications strategy for specific local areas and audiences than for regional and international levels.
- > Good internal communications is crucial but often missing. Staff in the field need to know what's happening centrally and how their work fits into the bigger picture.
- > Cultural barriers can prevent communications (e.g. women having little say).
- > It is important to ensure results are sustainable after the project has ended (e.g. partners can get funding from elsewhere, or target audiences can pay for services or tools).
