

## **SECTION 4**

# **How to plan communication strategically**

*“Failing to plan is planning to fail”*

## What is in this section?

Biodiversity conservation depends on the actions of many people and organisations. CEPA is a means to gain people's support and assistance.

CEPA fails when the activities are not properly planned and prepared.

Planning and preparation for CEPA identifies pitfalls, ensures efficient use of resources and maximises effect.

Section 1 dealt with importance of CEPA to achieve biodiversity objectives. It explained the role of CEPA in NBSAP formulation, updating and implementing.

Section 2 provides CEPA tools to make use of networks. Much can be done with networks and networking to implement the NBSAP with limited resources.

Section 3 provides CEPA tools to involve stakeholders in implementing the NBSAP.

Section 4 provides tools to strategically plan communication, assisting to develop a communication plan step by step.

In all sections the toolkit is comprised of

### CEPA Fact Sheet

Providing theory and practice pointers on how and why to use CEPA

### Example

Providing a small case study of how CEPA has been used to illustrate the fact sheets

### Checklist

Providing a handy reference list to check your CEPA planning against

## Contents

<b>Introduction Why plan communication strategically?</b> .....	231
FACT SHEET: What is strategic communication? .....	231
EXAMPLE: Communication Plan for a Biodiversity Day Campaign .....	232
CHECKLIST: communication planning .....	233
<b>Step 1: Analysis of the issue and role of communication</b> .....	234
FACT SHEET: How to analyse the problem .....	235
FACT SHEET: How to identify the role of communication .....	235
FACT SHEET: When is communication alone not enough? .....	236
FACT SHEET: How to decide the role of communication in a biodiversity issue .....	236
EXAMPLE: Communication without a situation analysis .....	238
EXAMPLE: Communication alone cannot solve the problem .....	238
EXAMPLE: Biodiversity issues that are too broadly formulated to communicate properly .....	239
EXAMPLE: Starving wolves attack villages in Siberia—no role for communication .....	239
EXAMPLE: Crocodiles protection: vial role for communication .....	240
EXAMPLE: Communication based on insufficient analysis of the biodiversity issue .....	240
<b>Step 2: Selecting target groups/audiences and stakeholders</b> .....	242
FACT SHEET: Target groups: Whom do you want to reach? .....	243
FACT SHEET: How to determine target groups .....	243
CHECKLIST: Target group research designs .....	244
EXAMPLE: Understanding the target group .....	245
CHECKLIST: Target group research methods .....	246
CHECKLIST: Target group analysis .....	247
<b>Step 3: Determining the communication targets</b> .....	248
FACT SHEET: What effects do you want to accomplish? .....	249
FACT SHEET: How to determine communication targets .....	250
EXAMPLE: Objectives to influence knowledge, attitudes and behaviour .....	251
EXAMPLE: Communication objectives .....	251
<b>Step 4: Developing the strategy and selecting partners</b> .....	252
FACT SHEET: What broad approach are you going to use to communicate? .....	253
FACT SHEET: How to develop a strategy .....	253
FACT SHEET: Is it more effective to communicate directly or use intermediaries? .....	254
FACT SHEET: Is it more effective to focus on sending messages or a two way process? .....	255
FACT SHEET: Is it more effective to focus on an informative, emotional or an action approach? .....	256
EXAMPLE: Communication strategy to get feedback from the general public .....	257
EXAMPLE: Communication approaches .....	257
CHECKLIST: Choosing when to work with partners .....	258

<b>Step 5: Determining the messages</b> .....	260
FACT SHEET: What are you going to communicate? What is the message? .....	261
FACT SHEET: How to formulate a communication message? .....	262
FACT SHEET: How to pre-test communication messages? .....	263
EXAMPLE: Communication messages .....	264
CHECKLIST: Pre-testing messages .....	265
<b>Step 6: Determining the communication means</b> .....	266
FACT SHEET: How to get the message across .....	267
FACT SHEET: What communication means to use .....	267
FACT SHEET: How to select effective communication means .....	268
CHECKLIST: Selecting communication means .....	269
<b>Step 7: Organising communication and briefing partners</b> .....	270
FACT SHEET: Who does what? How to organise your communication efforts .....	271
FACT SHEET: How to work effectively with partners .....	271
CHECKLIST: Briefing partners .....	272
<b>Step 8: Planning: Milestones and Activities</b> .....	274
FACT SHEET: How to plan communication activities .....	275
CHECKLIST: Communication planning .....	276
CHECKLIST: Failure factors in communication planning .....	277
<b>Step 9: Budget for communication</b> .....	278
FACT SHEET: What does it cost? How to budget for communication .....	279
FACT SHEET: How to communicate with a tight budget .....	279
CHECKLIST: Funding sources .....	280
<b>Step 10 Monitoring and evaluation</b> .....	282
FACT SHEET: What did we accomplish? How to evaluate communication .....	283

# How to integrate biodiversity into other sectors

SECTION 3 | HOW TO ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS AND MAINSTREAM BIODIVERSITY

## Why plan communication strategically?

- Planning contributes greatly to success.
- Some key questions to consider at the start of the process are:
  - Where are you now and where do you want to be?
  - What will you need to do to get there?
  - What role can communication, education and training play to achieve your goals?
  - How will you learn from your experiences en route?

No strategic planning	Strategic planning
Focus on deciding the media before the message	Targets, audience and message clarified before deciding on the media to choose for the message.
Creative people come up with a 'cool' and fun idea	Creative people plan to achieve desired outcomes
Focus on media	Focus on audience, message & content
Content and message are secondary to media and often cannot answer 'why' or 'what' questions	Media is considered as a tool to achieve objectives

### Communication is part of the entire policy and strategy implementation process

To implement the NBSAP there are many projects to be prepared and undertaken. Even though most CBD focal points and NBSAP coordinators know the importance of a project's inception phase, this stage often receives little attention. Especially the role of communication is often not well considered in the inception stage. Usually communication is considered only after plans, policies or projects are prepared. Practice shows that this is a pitfall and strongly reduces the potential for successful project implementation.

### Ad hoc communication is not effective

There is an enormous difference between communication strategically planned and that without strategic planning. How often do we hear people say "lets make a video to inform everyone" before any thought about what is the result to be achieved?

## What is strategic communication?

**Strategic communication** is planned and accomplishes a purpose.

**Strategic communication** is targeted to a particular audience or audiences.

**Strategic communication** is designed and delivered to produce the desired outcomes which may be changes in policy, practices of an organisation or individual behaviour.

**Strategic communication** aims to achieve results with the best possible use of time and resources.

### There are two broad approaches to communication

**Instrumental communication:** The communication plan is organised to raise the interest of the public, politicians and other special groups for a particular issue, or to generate support for policies or plans. Communication may be used alone or with other policy instruments like financial incentives or regulations.

**Interactive communication:** The communication plan establishes active dialogue with certain interest groups to fully involve them in planning, implementing or evaluating a policy or NBSAP component.

### THE 10 STEPS FOR COMMUNICATION PLANNING ARE:

1. Analysis of the issue and the role of communication.
2. Selecting target groups/audiences and stakeholders.
3. Determining the communication targets.
4. Developing the strategy and selecting partners.
5. Determining the messages.
6. Selecting the communication means.
7. Organising communication and briefing partners.
8. Planning (in terms of milestones and activities).
9. Budgeting of activities.
10. Monitoring and evaluation.

## EXAMPLE: Communication Plan for a Biodiversity Day Campaign in the Netherlands

### Issue

How to involve people—especially youth—in new thinking and new ‘doing’ for a sustainable world. How to use the national and international exposure of Biodiversity Day?

### Target groups

Teachers, Youth from 12–17 years, Parents, Municipalities, NGOs.

### Communication objectives

- Enlarge knowledge about the causal links with regard to biodiversity.
- Convey a feeling that everyone can provide a useful personal contribution.
- Provide action perspectives that deliver visible results.

### Strategy

Explore the potential of a national campaign that is attractive to join, is clear about what to do, triggers bottom up initiatives, can provide a basis for follow-up and offers a maximum of opportunities for free publicity. Start with a feasibility study among key stakeholders.

### Message (to be tested)

Biodiversity Day: the world is changing, give your ideas and join in.

### Means (to be tested)

- Interactive web site with information on biodiversity and classroom and outdoor activities;
- Poster competition: pre-selection of posters by Art Schools, well known artists used as national jurors, best posters to be printed and used in municipalities;
- Competition to make a biodiversity commercial using mobile phone video, with the best one to be broadcast on national TV. Local and national discussion forums with youth, politicians, business, NGOs, government;
- Formal agreements that make commitments: such as at home on car use, energy saving, spending two hours with the family telling stories on nature experiences by candle light on biodiversity day, visiting a biodiversity exhibition etc.

### Organisation, Budget, Planning, Evaluation

The choice of partners, intermediaries, fundraising, time frame, milestones and evaluation methods to be decided on the basis of the feasibility study.

Source: HECT Consultancy, Netherlands

### CHECKLIST: Communication planning

#### THE FOLLOWING GUIDELINES HAVE PROVED TO BE OF HELP WHEN DEVELOPING A COMMUNICATION PLAN.

- **TIMEFRAME:** first you have to clarify if you are designing a communication strategy with long term goals, a communication plan with short term goals or a communication plan for a specific project.
- **TARGET:** second you need to be conscious of whether you are dealing with a communication campaign that is organised to raise the interest of the public, politicians and other special groups for a particular issue, or to generate support for policies or plans—this is **instrumental communication**. (*The Biodiversity Campaign uses instrumental communication*).
- It may be that your communication plan is for establishing active dialogue with certain groups and fully involving them in planning, implementing or evaluating biodiversity policy or projects—this is **interactive communication**. (*The feasibility study among stakeholders in the example of a Biodiversity Campaign is a form of interactive communication*).

#### THE 10 STEPS FOR COMMUNICATION PLANNING ARE:

1. Analysis of the issue and role of communication.
2. Selecting target groups/audiences and stakeholders.
3. Determining the communication targets.
4. Developing the strategy and selecting partners.
5. Determining the messages.
6. Selecting the communication means.
7. Organising communication and brief partners.
8. Planning (in terms of milestones and activities).
9. Budgeting of activities.
10. Monitoring and evaluation.

#### SOME TIPS:

- When implementing, regularly check how feasible the plan is, and what disasters may occur.
- Be flexible in adapting the plan in case of shortages in money or time.
- As success breeds success, it is better be less ambitious and start with a plan that almost certainly will lead to success, than be too ambitious and not make any real impact.

## **Step 1: Analysis of the issue and role of communication**

# Step 1: Analysis of the issue and role of communication

SECTION 4 | HOW TO PLAN COMMUNICATION STRATEGICALLY

## How to analyse the problem

Before you develop a communication strategy, you must know clearly what is the biodiversity conservation issue and if and how communication can contribute to solving it. Understanding the real issues underpins designing a communication strategy. Accurate insight of the causes and effects is crucial to convince target groups, potential partners, decision makers and other sectors or levels of government that a specific issue needs to be tackled urgently.

This is the first essential step for any communication plan to prevent wasting energy, time and financial resources in communication efforts which will have no effect.

### How to start?

First identify the biodiversity issue and analyse the character and extent of the problem.

## How to identify the role of communication

To identify the role of communication it is necessary to ask the parties responsible or interested in the issue:

What is the current Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (behaviour) of the target groups and stakeholders involved?

A shorthand way to refer to Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices is KAP.

What reactions do the target groups and stakeholders have to changes that might be suggested to conserve biodiversity?

It is important to clarify what are the desired changes in the people involved in this issue?

- Is it to **change the attitudes of people** and/or organisations, or
- **change the mind sets**—the way people look at a certain issue, or
- **change** the way people feel about an issue, or (**more difficult**)
- **change behaviour**?

To assess the role of communication in this change process it is necessary to understand if the problem is due to:

- A lack of awareness that the issue is important;
- Negative attitudes towards the issue or the solutions;
- Lack of skills or “know how” to make a change.

In these cases the different states of knowledge, attitudes and practices need different communication solutions, and communication may be used as a sole instrument.

### A BIODIVERSITY ISSUE CAN BE ANALYSED BY ANSWERING THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- What is the extent of the biodiversity issue in qualitative and quantitative terms?
- What makes the issue urgent? Which are the consequences if no action is taken?
- What is the context and what are the causes of the issue?
- Which activities cause the biodiversity issue?
- Which parties are responsible for these causes and activities?
- Which parties have interest in these activities?

(See also stakeholder analysis in section 3)

### FREQUENTLY MADE MISTAKES IN COMMUNICATION PLANNING: NO PROPER PROBLEM ANALYSIS

The role of communication is usually poorly defined when implementing NBSAPs. First the issue is poorly defined. The people who are targeted are not understood in terms of their reasons for their actions or barriers to changing. The outcomes of the communication are not defined clearly.

**Example 1:** Communication “to address threats to biodiversity” is too vague, when the real communication issue is “to reduce the pressure of visitors camping on the habitat of a rare flower species”

**Example 2:** Posters or leaflets with beautiful pictures and messages about the importance of an area that is to be protected may not be very useful if the real communication issue is to address people’s perception that a new protected area will mean restrictions to their normal way of life, business, recreation or new investments.

The communication needs more than pictures, publications or mass media. Rather interviews, hearings, roundtables and open negotiations may be more effective.

## Step 1: Analysis of the issue and role of communication

SECTION 4 | HOW TO PLAN COMMUNICATION STRATEGICALLY

### When is communication alone not enough?

Biodiversity issues are often complex as there are often many actors with different interests and viewpoints involved. The desired changes for conservation may benefit or disadvantage the different parties involved. The resistance to change might be due to a lack of financial resources, a lack of alternative ways of generating income, and a lack of technical resources or infrastructure. In these cases communication alone cannot solve the problem.

When the desired change of behaviour for conservation does not benefit the people involved, then other instruments need to be used. Communication can support the use of these instruments. Instruments to bring about change are:

- Legislation and regulation: i.e. laws, directives, restrictions, conventions;
- Financial incentives: i.e. subsidies, deposits, fees, taxes, compensation;
- Facilities: proper equipment, machines and tools, infrastructure.

#### COMMUNICATION FOR THREE CATEGORIES OF BIODIVERSITY ISSUES

From a communication perspective, three categories of problems can be distinguished:

- Biodiversity problems with causes which can be fully addressed and solved with communication as a **sole instrument**—i.e. voluntary changes are possible in knowledge, attitudes or practice.
- Biodiversity problems where a combination of communication related causes and other causes exist which can be solved using communication as a **supporting instrument** for other incentives.
- Biodiversity problems with causes which have **no relation with communication** and which can only be solved with other instruments and measures.

### How to decide the role of communication in a biodiversity issue

#### QUESTIONS THAT HELP IDENTIFY THE POTENTIAL OF COMMUNICATION TO CHANGE THE BEHAVIOUR OF TARGET GROUPS.

##### *Are individual benefits larger than disadvantages?*

- What are the main benefits/disadvantages of the desired behaviour change for the target groups?
- Are the disadvantages bigger than benefits or advantages? If so, communication is best used as a supporting instrument (e.g. to explain new regulations).

##### *Attitude positive or negative?*

- What is the current attitude of the target group on the issue?
- If the attitude is positive, internal motivation might be sufficient to change the behaviour, and communication can be used to stress advantages.
- If the attitude is negative, the role of communication depends on the awareness of the problem.

##### *Is the target group aware of the problem?*

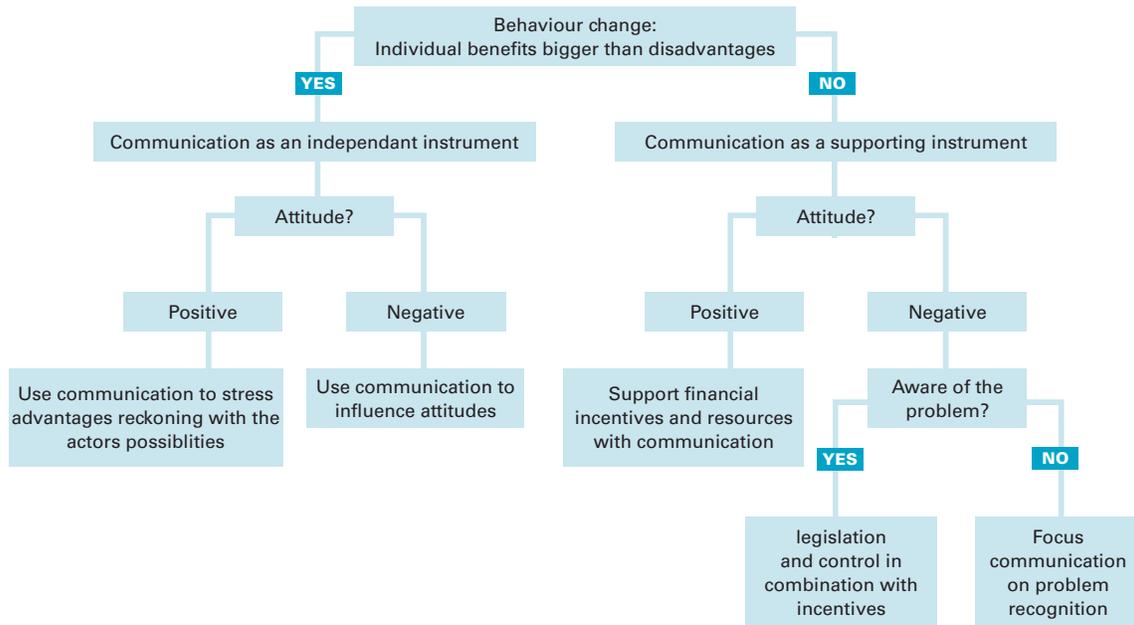
- If the target group already knows about the issue then a change in practice will only occur with legislation, controls and incentives. Communication can be used to explain the rules.
- If the target group lacks knowledge about the problem, communication should be focused on problem recognition.

These steps are explained in the two following figures.

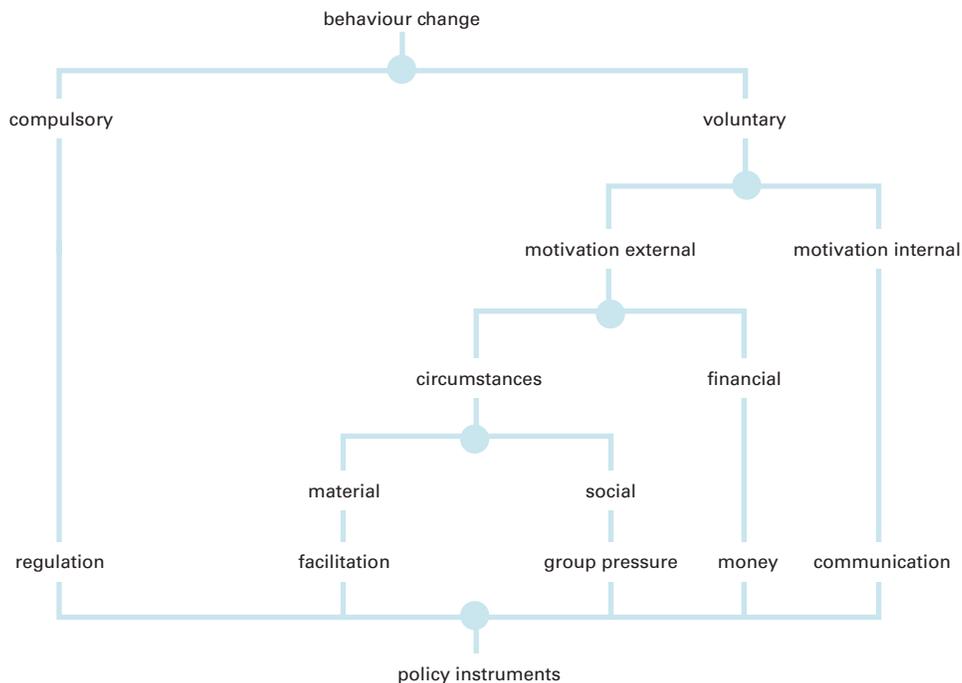
Biodiversity conservation requires changes in people's knowledge, attitudes and practices. People weigh up the benefits and disadvantages before making changes in their behaviour. The diagram below helps to clarify the role of communication, from a behaviour change perspective, in bringing about changes according to perceived benefit, as a sole instrument or as a support to other instruments.

# Step 1: Analysis of the issue and role of communication

SECTION 4 | HOW TO PLAN COMMUNICATION STRATEGICALLY



The diagram below is another way of showing what policy instruments might be used in bringing about changes in behaviour either voluntarily or compulsorily through regulation. Communication can be a sole instrument when people are motivated internally by their own values or concern e.g. for future generations. Where actions requested to conserve biodiversity are more difficult, external inducements or policy instruments are needed to motivate or assist people to change. Subsidies or financial support may help e.g. people to cover the risk involved in a change of practice. For others, providing material such as turtle friendly fishing nets may facilitate change.



Source: Cees Van Woerkum, Behaviour change and policy instruments 1999

**EXAMPLE: Communication without a situation analysis****Logging in Karelia**

The logging enterprise of the settlement Piaozero in the Republic of Karelia in the Russian Federation has been in existence since 1973. During all these years – with licenses issued by the Karelian government – almost the whole forest in the area was cut down. In 2000 the only forest left for use by a logging enterprise is located in the North of the Republic.

**NGO protests**

Russian environmental NGOs with support of their Finnish colleagues consider this forest unique and a biodiversity rich ecosystem which is very important for the European environment. The NGOs commenced a protest campaign against the planned enterprise and the licensing practice of the Karelian government. The conflict attracted international attention.

**Government communication**

The protest forced the Karelian government to pay more attention to the situation and the various stakeholders. The head of government visited the settlement Piaozero and had long discussions with local residents, the administration and workers of the logging enterprise. He assisted an initiative of the Russian NGOs to organise a workshop in Piaozero. During this workshop all the positions were revealed, but no consensus was achieved. Until today (2002) the situation continues to be very critical but the conflict is not resolved.

**Too late, no situation analysis, wrong message**

The government should have communicated with the NGOs initially. When addressing the issue, the government should have realised that the basis of the conflict is the economic and social issues in the area. The question for discussion, therefore, should not have focused on “to cut or not to cut”, but on “what are the best ways and means of improving the social and economic situation with minimal destruction of the forest.”

Source: ECAPP Distance Education Course

**EXAMPLE: Communication alone cannot solve the problem****Signboards are not enough**

Every weekend, a National Park receives a few hundred visitors from nearby cities. The visitors do not enter the park but stay close to the parking lot in a small area especially designed for picnics and enjoy the weather and the idea that they are out in nature. When they leave, a lot of litter is left behind. The Park management finds it difficult to invest in more cleaning personnel. The director of the park does not want to use wardens or the local police to patrol and enforce better environmental behaviour, as he considers the visitors to be good ambassadors and supporters of the park. He decides to put up signboards requesting the visitors to leave the place as clean as they found it.

There was no improvement in the situation even with the signboards. The Director doesn't understand why. Finally, one of the wardens asks him how the visitors could clean up after themselves, as the signboards request, when there aren't enough waste baskets.

As in this case, communication alone cannot often solve the problem. People need the necessary infrastructure and services to be able to act appropriately. Here communication is used to support the use of the services or provisions.

**Sending information messages alone is not enough**

A bay close to a city has many different species of shellfish. The inhabitants of the city collect them for food. A few species are rare and threatened. To protect these species, the local authority introduced a new regulation restricting their collection. The shellfish collectors were informed about the new regulation (giv-

ing knowledge). However, knowing about the regulation does not mean that the shell collectors will stop gathering the rare species. The people need to believe that it is in the best of everyone's interests that the rare species should be protected (creating attitude).

Even when the shell collectors agree with the regulation and understand the reasons for implementing it, they may still not obey (or change their behaviour). People might continue gathering rare species because of the money they make. When the desired change of behaviour has more individual disadvantages than benefits, communication is not enough. Other measures are necessary, such as patrolling the beach and fining the transgressors.

### **EXAMPLE: Biodiversity issues that are too broadly formulated to be able to communicate properly**

- Human population growth means growing demands for space and food, thus threatening biodiversity.
- Urban sprawl and intensive agriculture and forestry encroach on habitats.
- Extension of road, rail and electricity networks fragments habitats and scares away some species.
- Overexploitation of natural resources leads to extinction of species.
- Extension of roads, rails and electricity networks fragments habitats and scares away some species.
- Pollution affects the health of animals and plants as much as human health.
- Environmental disasters such as oil spills have devastating consequences on birds and the marine fauna and flora.
- Climate change is predicted to cause many species to move to other regions or become extinct.
- Invasive alien species enter an ecosystem where they don't occur naturally, thrive and overwhelm endemic species reducing natural biodiversity.

The above biodiversity issues can be made more concrete for the purposes of communication (and action) by asking the following questions:

- What is the extent of the issue in qualitative and quantitative terms?
- What makes the issue urgent? Which are the consequences when no action is taken?
- What is the context and what is the cause of the issue?
- Which activities cause the issue?
- Which parties are responsible for these causes and activities?
- Which parties have interest in these activities?

### **EXAMPLE: Starving wolves attack villages in Siberia—no role for communication**

In January 2001, hundreds of starving wolves attacked villages and farms, in the vicinity of the city Krasnojarsk, searching for food. The usually timid animals were desperate for food after weeks of temperatures of -45°C. After they devoured cows, sheep and pigs, the wolves tried to enter houses. In Balachtinsk the people formed commandos responsible for preventing further attacks. A large number of wolves were killed. It is obvious that in extreme situations human survival has priority over environmental protection. To solve this problem in the future, other measures than communication are needed.

Source: ECAPP Distance Education Course

### EXAMPLE: Crocodiles protection: vital role for communication

The Philippine crocodile (*Crocodylus mindorensis*) is a critically endangered species endemic to the Philippines. A small and fragmented population survives in densely populated areas in the Northern Sierra Madre. The population is threatened by hunting, destructive fishing methods (i.e. fishing with dynamite, electricity or chemicals), and the conversion of wetland habitats. Negative perceptions of crocodiles are a major obstacle for effective conservation of the species in the wild.

A communication campaign started in 2000 centred on the theme “the Philippines crocodile; something to be proud of”. Booklets, newsletters, calendars and posters were distributed in the area of the crocodile’s habitat. Lectures on crocodiles were given at local schools. Students performed theatre and puppet shows in remote villages. Community consultations were held to listen to the questions and concerns of local people. Training strengthened the capacities of village leaders to effectively manage wetland resources. Ninety-eight percent of people now know the Philippine crocodile is officially protected by law. Hunting and the use of destructive fishing methods have virtually stopped in the area. More importantly, the people actively support the conservation program and take pride that the Philippine crocodile survives in their village.

Merlijn van Weerd, Gwen van Boven and Jan van der Ploeg in: Communicating Protected Areas, IUCN 2004, Chapter 16, page 139

### EXAMPLE: Communication based on insufficient analysis of the biodiversity issue



An Environment Protection Agency is worried about the increasing costs of indemnification to be paid for loss of farmers’ property caused by large mammals such as bear, snow leopard or wolf from the various national parks in the mountain region of the country. The management feels that quite often the damage is not caused by these mammals, and that people are unnecessarily scared of them and blame these predators for loss of their chicken or sheep rather than to other causes.

To rectify this, the management decided to produce a local language version of a document on predator kills done by another country. The educational publication includes colour photos, drawings and other biological information about the signs predators leave and how to identify them from their kills. The publication is sold in national parks visitor’s centres and the Agency’s main office in the capital. The Agency hopes that the booklets will be used in schools to help raise environmental awareness to solve the problem. They are surprised to find no change in the practice of indemnification.

Analysis of the problem reveals that the farmers who claim damage are the main stakeholders. The Environment Protection Agency has not given enough thought about whom they want to reach, the beliefs held by farmers about the matter, and the most effective ways to communicate to reach them. The farmers are not directly targeted through the communication means chosen, as they do not usually buy and read books or brochures. Even if they did read the publication, it will probably not have an effect because it is unlikely that the right language is used for this group.

Effective communication needs a proper analysis of the issue first to determine who are the decisive stakeholders and what are their attitudes concerning the issue to be solved. In this case, visiting the farmers, face to face and group meetings would have been more effective.

Source: ECAPP Distance Education Course

## **Step 2: Selecting target groups/ audiences and stakeholders**

## Step 2: Selecting target groups/audiences and stakeholders

SECTION 4 | HOW TO PLAN COMMUNICATION STRATEGICALLY

### Target groups: Whom do you want to reach?

Before you develop a communication plan, you must first know which target groups you want to reach.

**Target groups are relatively homogenous groups of people** (in terms of current knowledge, attitudes or practices or interest in the issue). Each target group requires a different communication approach according to their motivation.

**Target groups are instrumental in solving the problem.** The intent of the communication (or communication plus other instruments) is to gain the target groups' cooperation. Stakeholders include target groups but not all stakeholders are target groups.

#### WHAT ARE TARGET GROUPS?

Target groups include:

- the people who 'are behaving wrong' or whose behaviour you want to change (e.g. fishermen using dynamite on coral reefs);
- the people who are effected by this behaviour (e.g. the people involved in the local tourist industry);
- the people who have formal responsibility for the problem (e.g. local government officials);
- the people who influence the opinions and behaviour of those involved (e.g. journalists, opinion leaders and celebrities).

#### FREQUENTLY MADE MISTAKES IN COMMUNICATION PLANNING: POOR RESEARCH ON THE TARGET GROUPS

- Focusing on all stakeholders rather than on the main target group. (i.e. the people who can really make a difference to solve the issue).
- Trying to convince stakeholders rather than listening and taking on board their points of view, understanding their motivations and how they relate to the issue.
- Seeing stakeholders in biodiversity issues as 'enemies', rather than agents of change and interest groups that are as legitimate as the sustainable development experts.

### How to determine target groups

Many different forms of research are used to inform managers and communicators about target groups.

#### What is a research objective?

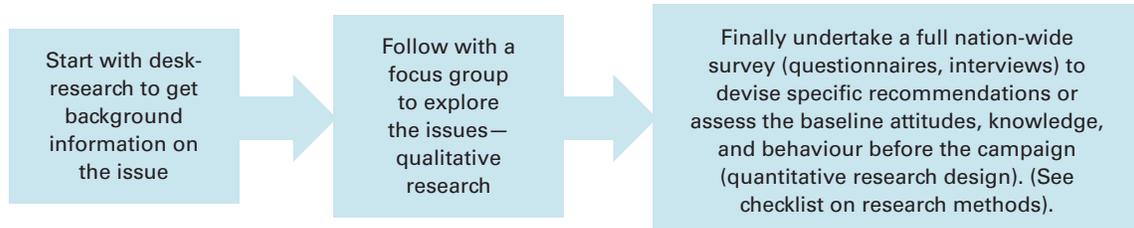
To set the research objectives a good question to ask is, "What information is needed to solve the problem?"

#### What research methods are used?

The following research methods can be used: desk-research of existing information, interviews, questionnaires, web surveys, focus groups and expert interviews. Often a combination of methods is used.

The research design may be **quantitative**—giving figures that can be extrapolated to a broader population; and /or **qualitative** giving more subtle information derived from open questions; **observational**, whereby the behaviours of people are observed and recorded; **experimental**, whereby a controlled experiment is undertaken to observe the effect of a changed variable.

#### Example of using different research methods for a single initiative to get to know target groups



#### It helps to consult a communication expert

It may be wise to consult a communication expert about the most effective research design for your goals and budget. Expert advice is most productive during the phase when the research objectives are defined and the research design is constructed.

## CHECKLIST: Target group research designs

Often to assess the knowledge, attitudes and current behaviour of target groups, social research has to be conducted. Methodologically four types of research designs can be distinguished:

### Qualitative research

- Generally used for exploratory purposes;
- Uses small number of respondents;
- Cannot be generalized to the whole population, and
- Statistical significance and confidence are not calculated.

**Examples:** Focus groups and in-depth interviews.

### Quantitative research

- Generally used to draw conclusions and tests a specific hypothesis;
- Uses random sampling techniques to make inferences from the sample to the population;
- Involves a large number of respondents.

**Examples:** Surveys, web based surveys, interviews, and questionnaires.

### Observational techniques

- The researcher observes social phenomena, or environmental behaviour in the natural setting;
- Observations can be cross-sectional (i.e. observations made during the same time period) or longitudinal (i.e. observations occur over several time-periods).

**Examples:** Observation of local communities in the proximity of nature reserves and visitors of parks.

### Experimental techniques

- The researcher creates a quasi-artificial environment to try to control spurious factors, and manipulates at least one of the variables.

**Example:** Using new signs to communicate with visitors in a specific area of a park and assessing if knowledge, attitudes or behaviour is affected.

### EXAMPLE: Understanding the target group

In Bulgaria a project was initiated close to Central Balkan National Park in a small village Rosino. Because of the economic difficulties and high level of unemployment there were many cases of poaching in the park: cutting trees, hunting wild animals and illegally collecting herbs and fruits.

The aim of the project was to introduce to the local population opportunities for small businesses based on natural resources use. The target group was the community of Rosino village with about 4000 inhabitants of different ethnic origin. The design of the project envisaged the population of the village to be approached through the local school.

The Park directorates' experts, the public relations officer and the agronomist conducted a program to train the school teachers to grow herbs and methods to involve students and parents in taking up this opportunity. The mayor of the village agreed to give some municipal land to the school to be used for these purposes.

The funding for the project was ensured by the park directorate. Children and teachers worked on it all through the year. They grew a good crop of five species of herbs found in the national park, dried them, and with the mediation of the park directorate sold the herbs to a small factory for the production of tea. Meanwhile a local NGO was established in the village to support the environmental education activities.

Several families of the children who had been most active in the past year proposed to take the responsibility for cultivation in the next year. The park will support and maintain the supervisory role, bring in experts where necessary and facilitate the process in the village. By focusing on the school and involving parents in the project, a bottom up process was stimulated. This project takes the local people, their interests and beliefs as the starting point.

Reference: Kamelia Georgieva, Bulgaria in: ESDebate, IUCN 1999

**CHECKLIST: Target group research methods** **Desk-research**

This involves gathering data that already exists from a large number of sources, such as internal documents, publications of governmental and non-governmental institutions, free access data on the internet, professional newspapers and magazines, annual reports of companies and commercial databases. Desk research is strongly recommended to start any communication activity so as to gain background knowledge on the subject and provide useful leads. This helps maximize output from a research budget.

 **Interviews**

Face to face or telephone interviews are effective ways to get information about a certain issue. Telephone interviews are a fast way to collect input, ideas and advice. Additional information can be gathered using questionnaires or web based surveys. Interviews can be used to explore a problem and potential solutions. Some survey methods use telephone interviews with a set questionnaire.

 **Questionnaires**

Questionnaires are effective and cheap to get quantitative information. The questions are mostly closed. The response rate is influenced by the length of the questionnaire, complexity of the questions, credibility of the sender and motivation to complete the questionnaire. It helps if answering is fun! A large sample is required as typically returns to mailed or electronic forms are around 20-30%.

 **Web based surveys**

Web based surveys have the additional advantage of processing the responses to a questionnaire automatically. There is good software freely available to conduct web based surveys, e.g. [www.moodle.org](http://www.moodle.org) or [Monkey Survey](http://Monkey Survey) [www.monkeysurvey.org](http://www.monkeysurvey.org). The same criteria and guidelines apply as for questionnaires.

 **Focus groups**

A focus group is a form of qualitative research in which a group of people are asked about their attitude towards a product, service, or idea. Questions are asked in an interactive group setting where participants are free to talk with other group members. Focus groups are an important tool for acquiring feedback. They particularly allow people to discuss, view, and/or test new services and ideas. This can provide invaluable information about the potential for acceptance of a proposed solution.

### CHECKLIST: Target group analysis

Knowing the relevant target groups is essential for developing an effective communication strategy. Reaching the wrong people with the right message will have no effect; reaching the right people with the wrong message will not realize your aim. This phase requires answers to a range of questions. The following checklist may help to analyze target groups.

- Which target groups are involved?
- Who is directly affected by the plan or activity?
- What is the composition of these groups in terms of demographic character (age, income, religion, gender, education and lifestyle)?
- What roles or positions can be distinguished in the target group?
- What interests do the target groups have regarding the problem and solutions?
- Who will benefit? Who will suffer damage or loss?
- What level of knowledge do target groups have of the problem and solutions?
- What is the attitude of the target group towards the problem and towards proposed solutions?
- Can you expect resistance for change?
- Who is not directly involved, but can influence opinions?
- What relationship does your organisation have with the target groups? How do they perceive you?
- What communication means do they use?
- Is it possible to use intermediary organisations to reach the target groups?

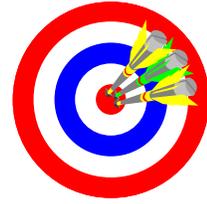
## **Step 3: Determining the communication targets**

## Step 3: Determining the communication targets

SECTION 4 | HOW TO PLAN COMMUNICATION STRATEGICALLY

### What effects do you want to accomplish?

To achieve the changes in people that are required to reach your biodiversity conservation objectives communication in most cases will need to be used in combination with other instruments. In any project there are communication targets which are different from the biodiversity conservation targets, though each is related.



#### Communication targets should be:

- clear about the results to be achieved, be specific and measurable;
- realistic, feasible and acceptable;
- about motivating a change in knowledge, attitudes or behaviour by being neither too ambitious nor too 'weak';
- indicating when the results should be achieved.

Targets can range from involving people in problem solving, to seeking attention for an issue, increasing knowledge or awareness, motivating behaviour or developing skills to take action.

#### A TARGET SHOULD BE SMART:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Acceptable
- Realistic
- Time related

Targets that read as *'we want to increase environmental consciousness of the public in the coming years'* or *"we want to educate the people about the importance of this protected area"* are too vague.

It will be impossible to determine whether the communication efforts are successful or not.

The target *'we want to achieve 95% of the park's visitors have stopped littering'* is specific and measurable.

**Communication targets should relate to the NBSAP objectives and mission** and can be specific or broad. The communication targets should be linked to the overall department or ministry organisational objectives. Realising the communication targets should contribute to achieving the goals of the NBSAP.

Communication targets are about knowledge, attitudes and practices and are different to conservation targets, which refer to size of a population conserved, or area of an ecosystem protected.

## Step 3: Determining the communication targets

SECTION 4 | HOW TO PLAN COMMUNICATION STRATEGICALLY

### How to determine communication targets

To determine the communication targets a thorough understanding of the current situation is essential to determine feasible communication targets. It is impossible to identify a realistic target when there is no clarity about what the target group knows about the issue, the attitude they have and how they behave.

#### THREE CATEGORIES OF POTENTIAL COMMUNICATION TARGETS

**Providing knowledge:** when the target groups are not, or insufficiently, informed; do not have information about the problem at hand; the cause and effect relationship; or potential solutions, then the communication target is aimed at developing the appropriate knowledge and understanding.

**Example:** Residents of a protected area do not realise that their fishing methods will harm the environment and will decrease chances of future income.

**Changing attitudes:** when target groups have the 'wrong' attitude about the problem or issue or towards potential solutions, then the communication target relates making a shift in that attitude, so that at least the attitude does not negatively impact on the conservation issue.

**Example:** Residents of a protected area have a strong preference for indigenous fishing methods and distrust alternatives.

**Changing behaviour:** when the target groups behave in a way which endangers biodiversity, then the target of communication is to stop or change that behaviour.

**Example:** Hunting in a protected area.

#### Communication targets and evaluation

NBSAP coordinators should define their communication objectives clearly to evaluate progress.

#### FREQUENTLY MADE MISTAKES IN COMMUNICATION PLANNING: NO PROPER DEFINITION OF OBJECTIVES

- the objective of the communication activity is not properly defined or is too vague;
- the objectives are too ambitious to achieve;
- communication experts are not involved in defining the objectives and planning the interventions, but are only tasked to communicate the plan or policy to the stakeholders with minimal or no budget;
- there is lack of knowledge of what is precisely wanted from the target groups and what is required to achieve the result:
  - e.g. is knowledge needed? new skills and practices?
  - e.g. do we need an attitude change from them?
- communication goals are set to change other people's behaviour and values, without understanding how the behaviour change can take place;
- the fact that people need social, economic or other benefits for any kind of behaviour change is not considered when objectives are defined;
- indicators are not defined for the communication targets/objectives, making evaluation of the outcome difficult.

### EXAMPLE: Objectives to influence knowledge, attitudes and behaviour

The Caspian Sea is a natural area on which many people living in Russia, Turkmenistan, Iran, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan depend for their livelihood. Sustainable fishing is essential for these livelihoods and to conserve the biodiversity of the Caspian Sea. A series of international initiatives to contribute to a solution to overfishing was introduced recently.



Photo ECAPP distance education course

One of the purposes of the communication here can be to inform fishermen in different countries about the new recommendations on fishing—providing new knowledge and developing attitudes in support of the recommendations.

However, only a change in knowledge and attitude will not stop unsustainable fishing because fishermen depend on fishing for their livelihood. Alternatives to generate income have to be introduced to realize a behaviour change.

Communication can therefore only play a supporting role in this biodiversity conservation issue.

### EXAMPLE: Communication objectives

TARGET	CHANGE IN:
80% of the visitors to a nature park should be aware that hiking in specific areas damages nature and wildlife.	<b>Knowledge</b>
80% of car drivers should be aware that public transport is better for the environment than driving.	<b>Knowledge</b>
A local community living in a nature park should appreciate the need to protect a specific species which is threatened with extinction.	<b>Attitude</b>
Hotels on the island should welcome the introduction of a system of eco-labels and a system of training, control and regulation.	<b>Attitude</b>
75% of government officials working in departments which have an impact on the environment should take the NBSAP into consideration when formulating plans, for instance about infrastructure, agriculture or industrial development.	<b>Behaviour</b>
50% of directors of large extractive industries and 25% of medium size companies should integrate biodiversity issues in their business plans and mission.	<b>Behaviour</b>

## **Step 4: Developing the strategy and selecting partners**

## Step 4: Developing the strategy and selecting partners

SECTION 4 | HOW TO PLAN COMMUNICATION STRATEGICALLY

### What broad approach are you going to use to communicate?

The next step is to plan how in broad terms you are going to communicate with the target group to achieve your objectives.

While it is always tempting to want to tell everyone as much as you can, to share your knowledge and enthusiasm for the biodiversity issue, there are not enough hours in the day to achieve this.

Unfortunately not everyone wants to be a convert to your issues either! As your analysis of the target groups' knowledge, interests and motivations reveal, there are different needs for information and other interventions to achieve the desired changes. Sometimes government is not the most trusted in the environmental field, though NGOs or the media are. This has implications for how you might choose to communicate with the target group and who you might work with as partners.

#### FREQUENTLY MADE MISTAKES IN COMMUNICATION PLANNING: COMMUNICATION JUST SEEN AS INFORMATION

- Over loading the audience with facts and information without understanding their level of understanding and needs.
- Thinking that information and facts are the best means to convince people to adopt a particular way of thinking.
- Not realizing that expert information is not always acceptable to the audience; that it may be too scientific or unappealing. The audience then decides that the information is not relevant for them.

#### An important axiom

“What we say is not necessarily heard, what is heard is not necessarily understood, what is understood is not necessarily acted upon, what is done is not necessarily repeated”.

If we realize this, we might find ways for effective communication

### How to develop a strategy

The term strategy has its origin in the art of war. A communication strategy determines how your organization or NBSAP aims to achieve its communication targets. The strategy describes fundamental choices about the approach which will be applied.

The following questions guide NBSAP coordinators as to how to develop a communication strategy.

#### HOW TO DECIDE ON COMMUNICATION APPROACH OR STRATEGY

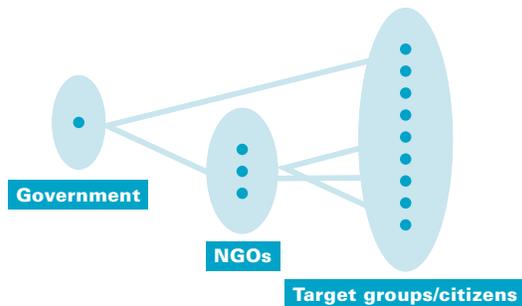
1. Who took the initiative to tackle the problem at hand?
2. Is it more effective to communicate directly with the target groups or is it more effective to communicate through intermediaries?
3. Is it more effective to focus on sending messages, or is it more effective to initiate a two way process?
4. Is it more effective to focus on an informative approach (i.e. providing information about functional aspects of the problem), an emotional approach or a combination of both?

Each of these questions is dealt with in separate fact sheets following.

## Step 4: Developing the strategy and selecting partners

SECTION 4 | HOW TO PLAN COMMUNICATION STRATEGICALLY

### Strategy design—Is it more effective to communicate directly with the target groups or more effective to communicate through intermediaries and partners?



It can be costly, complex and time consuming for a NBSAP coordinator to communicate directly with an entire target group, especially when the target audience is large and there are many different target groups to be reached. It may be that working with intermediaries is an effective and efficient way to reach your target groups. The advantages and disadvantages to be considered in selecting your strategy are outlined below.

#### ADVANTAGES OF WORKING WITH INTERMEDIARIES

- It can be more economical.
- Intermediaries can have data bases on the target group to help reach them effectively.
- Intermediaries can have support from a large audience or have grass root support.
- Intermediaries can have a reliable, solid image for the target group and authority based on expertise.

#### DISADVANTAGES OF WORKING WITH INTERMEDIARIES

- There can be lack control of the message.
- There can be a lack of control on the way the target group is approached.
- There can be lack of control on communication planning and the entire communication process.

#### OVERCOMING DISADVANTAGES

- Weighing the pros and cons of using intermediaries for each specific situation and selecting the most effective strategy.
- Developing good relationships with organisations with similar missions, or with organisations with missions and activities that can strengthen the mission and activities of the NBSAP.

## Step 4: Developing the strategy and selecting partners

SECTION 4 | HOW TO PLAN COMMUNICATION STRATEGICALLY

### Strategy design—Is it more effective to focus on sending messages or more effective to initiate a two way process?

#### Vertical model—sending messages

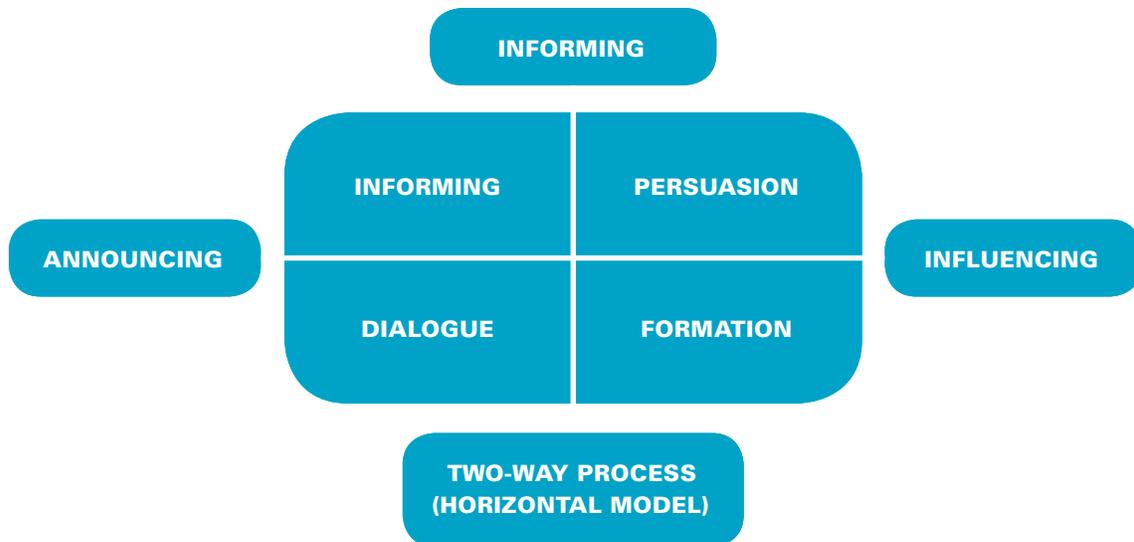
Communication is often a top down (vertical) process, with the focus on delivering messages and products to target groups. This is the more traditional view of communication.

In this 'vertical model', the person who receives the message is more or less a passive object. The one way or vertical model of communication is oriented to informing and persuading in order to influence or put issues on the agenda.

#### Horizontal model—initiating a two-way process

In the horizontal model of communication the focus is on dialogue to create shared meaning. Communication is a two-way process. More important in this approach is the focus on process, feedback, dialogue and people rather than on products, messages, issues and technologies. In the two-way approach there is a genuine interest in the target groups being involved in forming policy and actions together (with the government).

The selection of the approach depends on the situation.



#### WHAT APPROACH IS APPROPRIATE?

- When tackling a relative simple and straight forward problem, focusing on sending messages can be very effective (e.g. to prompt visitors of a national park to stop littering).
- When the problem is more complex and cooperation of different target groups with different interests is required, a two-way communication process will be most effective.

## **Step 4: Developing the strategy and selecting partners**

SECTION 4 | HOW TO PLAN COMMUNICATION STRATEGICALLY

### **Strategy design—Is it more effective to focus on an informative approach, an emotional approach, an action approach or a combination?**

Again the most effective approach depends on the situation. The table below gives examples of the different approaches for consideration as a part of the strategy to communicate with the target group.

<b>APPROACH</b>	<b>WHAT IS IT?</b>	<b>EXAMPLE</b>
<b>The informative approach</b>	Focus is on functional information about the problem, the causes and potential solutions.	A NGO distributing a brochure about pollution in a lake and the proposed activities to solve the problem.
<b>An emotional approach</b>	The aim is to create an image with the focus on communicating values which appeal to the lifestyle and values of a specific target group.	A Green Peace campaign aims to give the chemical industry a negative image by showing pictures of enormous industrial complexes which appear frightening and salienating.
<b>An action approach</b>	Focus is on the desired behaviour change of the target group.	Leaflet given out on entry that prompts visitors to stop littering in a national park.

## Step 4: Developing the strategy and selecting partners

SECTION 4 | HOW TO PLAN COMMUNICATION STRATEGICALLY

### EXAMPLE: Communication strategy to get feedback from the general public

#### Draft legislation on Environmental Impact Assessment

In 2000, the federal government of the Russian Federation elaborated the new concept of state environmental impact assessment. At the end of the year the first draft of the concept was ready. To get feedback on the draft, the government opened the discussion of the document to NGOs and the general public.

#### Mass media and internet

Notice of the draft concept was published in the mass media and the draft placed on the government website. Feedback was invited from lower levels of government through electronic means. An agreement was reached with a major NGO *Ecoline* to distribute the information through its electronic network of NGOs in Russia. All NGOs were requested to discuss the draft with their constituencies all over the country.

#### NGO as intermediary

*Ecoline* put the information on its own website with the request for comments, suggestions and other feedback. *Ecoline* then collected the information from the comments and presented it to the government.

The government invited *Ecoline* to participate in the workshop to discuss the draft concept and to present the results from the public discussion.

#### Effectiveness

The government selected a very effective strategy of communication with the general public using mass media and electronic means of communication. Especially important was the use of a NGOs' electronic network through the NGO *Ecoline* to organise a wide public discussion in different parts of the country. Because of its good and reliable reputation among NGOs and the public, the NGO got a better response and higher quality feedback than the government would have achieved on its own from these audiences.

Source: ECAPP Distance Education Course

### EXAMPLE: Communication approaches

MESSAGE	APPROACH
The government is preparing a law on Environmental Impact Assessment, read the draft and send in your comments.	Information approach
Use the Pro Silva Method for forest management: it lowers your costs with a factor 5, it creates regular income, and it gives you more undergrowth and improves the immune system in your forest.	Information approach
Your forest is not only your property, but also the property of all beings living in the forest and of that of future generations.	Emotional approach
We need to save our natural resources for future generations; every human has the right to a healthy environment.	Emotional approach
Biodiversity Day: the world is changing, give your ideas and join in our poster competition, phone video competition, and many more activities.	Behaviour approach
Now we can stop using chemicals X and replace them with chemicals Y, an environmental friendly alternative which is just as economical.	Behaviour approach

**CHECKLIST: Choosing when to work with partners**

A partnership with other organisations can assist you to achieve project and program goals.

At this point in planning your strategy consider the idea of forming partnerships. An organisation which has high credibility among target groups and has communication means at its disposal to reach these target groups can give many advantages.

To decide on whether to undertake a partnership:

- Develop an overview of organisations who have a relationship with the audiences you want to target and of organisations communicating about similar values, knowledge and practices;
- Identify the potential advantages of partnerships with these organisations such as the:
  - ▶ Knowledge, skills, networks and other resources;
  - ▶ Greater credibility of your message;
  - ▶ Opportunities to reach target groups.
- Identify the potential disadvantages of partnerships:
  - ▶ More complex decision making;
  - ▶ Differences in aims and culture;
  - ▶ Resources required to develop partnerships.
- Weigh up the pros and cons and decide if partnerships can contribute to your project or program.



## **Step 5: Determining the messages**

## Step 5: Determining the messages

SECTION 4 | HOW TO PLAN COMMUNICATION STRATEGICALLY

### What are you going to communicate? What is the message?

The exchange of messages is the core of the communication process for a NBSAP coordinator. Formulating a good message is vital for the success of any communication. The message reflects what you want target groups to know, feel or do, and reflects why they should know, feel or do it. This section guides you to formulate effective messages.

#### What goes into a message?

A message is a translation of the communication objective for that target group.

The message uses words that are easy to understand by the target group. The message is in the language of that group.



Illustration from Uganda Wetland Programme

#### Messages—how to get started

Formulating effective messages requires proper knowledge and understanding of both the problem and the target group/s KAP.

- Make a rough outline of what has to be said to the target groups.
- The main theme of the message should reflect the target of the communication.
- Check that the message is consistent with the organisations' mission and/or policies.
- Then formulate sub-themes which reflect the benefits to the target groups.

#### How to be creative when formulating messages

Communicators need to add sparkle to bring issues alive! Although conservation is important, it isn't always interesting for non-experts. Formulating communication messages is both an analytical and a creative process. Thinking creatively is possible only when there is a clear picture of the current situation and the changes to be accomplished. To explore creative message ideas organise a brainstorming session.

Brainstorming is a method of problem solving in which members of a group contribute ideas spontaneously. The key to brainstorming is to not interrupt the thought process or question what is said. As ideas come to mind they are captured and in turn stimulate the development of other ideas.

## Step 5: Determining the messages

SECTION 4 | HOW TO PLAN COMMUNICATION STRATEGICALLY

### How to formulate a communication message

#### Relation of the message to the organisation (sender)

The message must connect to the image and identity of the sender. If this is not the case, the communication will lack credibility. For example, when corporations which are known to dump hazardous waste or neglect the local community in their operations, distributes a brochure about the importance of biodiversity to the company, the message will not have any impact at all, and may have a reverse effect.

#### Message—target group

The target group must understand and accept the message in order for it to be effective. So the message must connect to the characteristics of the target group: the existing knowledge, attitude, level of education, lifestyle, interests and their involvement in the problem and solutions, etc.

#### Message—targets in terms of knowledge, attitude, behaviour

The message must reflect the communication targets (whether targeting knowledge, attitude and/or behaviour). When the main purpose is to inform, the message should contain facts about the problem, causes and solutions. A persuasive message will not be effective in this case.

On the other hand, when the main purpose is to influence attitudes (for instance to build a positive image for a NGO as part of a fund raising strategy) the message should appeal to emotions.

#### Message—strategy

The message must connect to the communication strategy. Furthermore, the message should reflect the strategic approach: be informative, emotional or action oriented. The tone of voice should also reflect the strategy, e.g. humorous, threatening, fact giving/expert perspective, popular/informal.

#### Message—communication means

A well known slogan of 'communication guru' McLuhan is: *'the medium is the message'*. It is a fact that the combination of media and messages can either strengthen the effects of communication or weaken it. For instance, when a government distributes a brochure with the message that it values the opinions of local communities concerning wildlife conservation and these communities have never been listened to by the government, the message will lack credibility. However if that message is told by a group of government representatives when visiting a village meeting where the locals are invited to tell what's on their mind and share their ideas, it will be much more convincing.

## Step 5: Determining the messages

SECTION 4 | HOW TO PLAN COMMUNICATION STRATEGICALLY

### How to pre-test communication messages and means

When the message is developed it is a good idea to test it, along with the medium being used to see if it is understood as intended. By doing this before going into full production embarrassment and costly mistakes are avoided. In Swaziland for example an artist had drawn women sitting on chairs with men. This culturally incorrect drawing, which should have represented women sitting on the ground, distracted people from the biodiversity message of the document.

Pre-testing checks illustrations and messages for mis-interpretations or lack of clarity before they have been printed or distributed widely. As the message is closely linked with the means of message delivery, it is a good idea to try to use the intended means as well.

Pre-testing is a specific form of market research. Often a qualitative research design is effective with face-to-face interviews with about 20 respondents, ideally from the target group.

#### What is a disaster check?

When there is no time, personnel or budget available for a pre-test, the draft message can be subjected to at least a 'disaster check' with a small number of people who were not involved with the development of the message.

Pre-testing a message is often neglected, though this is a vital step.

When pre-testing a 'sample' of the communication message is presented to the target group to check:

- if the message is understood
- if the message is accepted and agreed upon
- if the tone of voice and message design appeals
- the effect of the message on the target group
- unexpected interpretations of message

This procedure is called a disaster check because experience shows that when people are involved in developing a communication message, they sometimes are 'blind' to unexpected effects – such as strong resistance caused by the tone of voice of the message. It can be disastrous when these effects become clear in a later stage, for instance after the advertisement is published in the most popular newspaper. A spouse, an acquaintance, neighbours or employees can be used for a disaster check.

**EXAMPLE: Communication messages**

Communication objectives for pioneers among private forest owners encouraging management for biodiversity

The communication objectives aimed at a pioneer group (those willing to try a new approach) of private forest owners would be to:

- focus their attention on a new way of forest management;
- raise their interest to broaden their knowledge of low-input management methods;
- generate desire to actively engage in applying the new methods to their management practices because of the various benefits of this method.

**Messages to these pioneers ...**

The main promotional message to introduce the new method of forest management to private owners and forest engineers is:

***“Lower your costs, sustain a regular income and provide opportunities for nature and society.”***

The various elements of this message are supported by a set of more detailed messages to be communicated over time, such as:

- Traditional reforestation is five times more expensive than the Pro Silva methods.
- Selective cutting creates regular income.
- Make ‘natural’ gaps for regeneration by selective cutting.
- Continue selective cutting only when regeneration follows in the gaps.
- The most important issue is to know ‘which tree to cut’.
- State Forest Service Supervisors are not your enemies, but your advisors for selective cutting.
- Regulation of hunting means more undergrowth.
- The forest is not only your property, but also the property of all living beings.
- The thousands of species living on dead wood are vital for the immune system of the forest.
- Visitors are your customers too!

Source: Varga Béla, Zanati Laszlo and Frits Hesselink, Communicating Biodiversity to Private Forest Owners in Hungary in: Communicating Biodiversity Conservation to Forest Owners in Eastern Europe, major issues and Model Communication Strategies, edited by Piotr Tyszko, IUCN 2004

### CHECKLIST: Pre-testing messages

- Comprehension:** Does the target group comprehend the messages? Are there unexpected interpretations of your message?
- Relevance:** Does the target group feel that the materials are tailored for them?
- Noticeable:** Do the materials attract attention of the target group?
- Memorable:** Does the target group remember the message after a few exposures?
- Credibility:** Does the target group trust the message/sender/source?
- Acceptability:** Do the materials and messages connect to the values and culture of the target group? Can you detect mistakes that you can now avoid?
- Attractiveness:** Would the target group pick up the flyer, stop to read the poster or watch the TV commercial that was prepared?
- 'KAP' changes:** After being exposed to the materials, did the target group increase its knowledge about the subject or change its attitudes, beliefs or behavioural intentions?

## **Step 6: Determining the communication means**

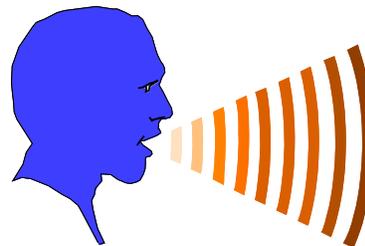
## Step 6: Determining the communication means

SECTION 4 | HOW TO PLAN COMMUNICATION STRATEGICALLY?

### How to get the message across

#### Communication “means” are the links with target groups

In this phase of strategic communication planning, you select the “means” to convey your message to the target group. The communication “means” or “channel” makes the message visual and/or audible to the target group. Communication means have strong impact on the effectiveness of communication because they form the link between your organisation and the target group.



#### The communication ‘means’ varies

The means chosen can vary enormously from situation to situation. Face to face communication is one of the best means of communication. For NBSAP coordinators, talking to (the right) people outside your agency can be a beneficial and cost effective tool.

#### FREQUENTLY MADE MISTAKES IN COMMUNICATION PLANNING: NO PROPER REFLECTION ON MEDIA CHOICE

- Nature conservation initiatives frequently use tools such as mass media, posters, brochures or films without a proper analysis of the real ‘means’ for solving a certain problem.
- People often forget that the most powerful communication tool is face to face conversation.

#### Potential pitfalls in choosing the means

Pitfall	Common result
Spending energy and time on developing a communication strategy, then producing the communication means (e.g. a brochure or DVD) very quickly.	Means do not appeal or lack the necessary quality to gain credibility with the target group.
Starting to invest in ‘means’ before answering essential questions concerning the strategy (‘jumping to means’).	Very likely that communication efforts will not be effective.

### What communication means to use

The choice of means to communicate the message depends on the communication targets, the characteristics of the target group, the message, the budget and your experience with the means.

*Interpersonal means* make direct contact between the communicating parties and take many forms.

#### Examples of interpersonal communication means:

- |  |                |  |
|--|----------------|--|
| • Dialogues, face to face conversation | • Tours        | • Workshops  |
| • Group discussions                    | • Home visits  | • Telephone calls                                  |
| • Conferences                          | • Round tables | • e-mail information service (question and answer) |
| • Symposia                             | • Exhibitions  | • Internet debate                                  |
|  | • Meetings     |  |

#### Advantages

- Every situation is unique because there is interaction;
- There is flexibility because during a dialogue or a meeting one can change the tone of voice, the strategy and the content of the communication and tailor it to the specific situation.

## Step 6: Determining the communication means

SECTION 4 | HOW TO PLAN COMMUNICATION STRATEGICALLY?

### Mass media

Examples of mass media means:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Newspapers</li> <li>• Press releases</li> <li>• Magazines</li> <li>• Newsletters</li> <li>• Manuals</li> <li>• Brochures, booklets, flyers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letters</li> <li>• Radio</li> <li>• Tapes</li> <li>• Television</li> <li>• Video</li> <li>• Posters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stickers</li> <li>• Banners</li> <li>• Billboards</li> <li>• CD Rom</li> <li>• Website</li> </ul>
Disadvantages	Advantages	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The message is 'fixed';</li> <li>• There is little flexibility for change once launched.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can reach large audiences;</li> <li>• Uses the credibility of the mass media.</li> </ul>	

### How to select effective communication means

#### Does the means help achieve the communication target?

Are the 'means' the most suitable to achieve the targets or objectives of the communication? Answering this question requires good judgment.

**Example:** Interpersonal communication will be more effective (e.g. house visits, meetings etc.) than mass media (e.g. advertisement in a newspaper) to get cooperation of a local community in a campaign against a nuclear power plant.

#### Do the means reach the target group?

The means/channels used should be 'available' for the target group and have sufficient credibility with them. There should be a good understanding of the 'means' used by the target group. The means should be ranked in terms of the reach, costs and appreciation (i.e. which media are liked best, are most credible with the target group etc.).

#### Do the means strengthen the message?

A well known slogan of 'communication guru' McLuhan is: *'the medium is the message'*. The combination of means and messages can either strengthen the effects of communication or weaken it.

**Example:** When a government distributes a brochure with the message that it values the opinions of local communities concerning wild life conservation, and these communities have never been listened to before, the message will lack credibility. The same message told by a group of government of representatives visiting a village meeting where locals can "tell what's on their mind" and their ideas will be much more convincing.

#### Are the means within the budget?

The budget is an important criterion for deciding on the 'means'. The production and distribution costs of 'means' should be weighed against the impact required with the target audience. When the budget is tight:

- Consider using the effectiveness of 'cheap' media with a high frequency (e.g. newspapers, free publicity in magazines, newsletters, etc.) than more expensive media (e.g. video) that may not reach the target group as effectively.
- Cooperate with other organisations to use their channels and means; cooperation is a money saver.
- Consider the effectiveness of communicating intensively with the most important target group than communicating more superficially with several.

### CHECKLIST: Selecting communication means

- Does the “means” help reach the communication targets.
- Are the means credible and suit the characteristics of the target groups so that it is easily accessed?
- Is the message reinforced by the means?
- What is the most effective reach and impact of the “means” that suits the budget?
- What is past experience with the means and its impact?

### Always pre-test your message and means!

- Ensure that the communication means appeal to the target group and have the desired effect;
- Check that the message has not been interpreted in an unexpected way.

## **Step 7: Organising communication and briefing partners**

## Step 7: Organising communication and briefing partners

SECTION 4 | HOW TO PLAN COMMUNICATION STRATEGICALLY

### Who does what? How to organise your communication efforts

For your communication to be effective, a great deal depends on organisation.

A clear division of tasks and responsibilities for your communication team is essential for success. If these prerequisites are not met, you will risk missing vital steps and deadlines. It will not be clear how the team will operate and how their activities are coordinated.



#### FREQUENTLY MADE MISTAKES IN COMMUNICATION PLANNING: DOING EVERYTHING YOURSELF

- Biodiversity experts often do most of the communication activities by themselves to keep control over all the communication to make sure that the information is valid and facts and figures are correct. This may not be effective when experts:
  - Are viewed by the audience as being 'on the other side' to them. Those audiences will then not listen.
  - Lack skills to translate the message to the specific audiences.
  - Do not have the knowledge or skills to organize interactive meetings, etc.

It is better that the NBSAP coordinators manage the process and delegate communication interventions to specialists and organisations that can multiply the message through their constituencies and networks (e.g. by generating free publicity in media, or by using the newsletters or magazines of NGOs, local authorities, etc.)

### How to work effectively with partners

NBSAP coordinators no doubt find there is too much to do in their day.



To achieve the complex and time consuming communication with many different target groups on many different issues NBSAP coordinators will probably involve partner organisations.

It is likely that there may be several organisations involved as partners in the communication plan and its implementation.

They may handle different parts of the communication. Briefing each and all the partners is pivotal to having a coordinated and effective approach.

**Briefing intermediaries and specialists is a key intervention in organizing communication activities. The checklist below gives some basic guidelines on briefing intermediaries.**

**CHECKLIST: Briefing partners**

Always put up a briefing on paper (this is often called Terms of Reference), but also discuss the briefing face-to-face. Ask questions to check if everything is understood. A good question at the end of a briefing is: 'What are you going to do now?'

*Devote enough time for a briefing.*

**In the briefing explain and describe:**

- Background to the assignment (i.e. the current situation, description of problem or issue);
- Task(s) or assignment(s);
- Target groups (as explicitly as possible: who specifically?);
- Communication objective (what do we want to achieve?);
- Communication strategy (how do we want to reach that);
- Budget;
- Conditions (house style, formats, reporting, etc.);
- Examples of desired results (drawings, printings, etc.);
- Deadlines.

*If needed add annexes such as:*

- lists with addresses,
- information about competition for your issue,
- information about earlier projects on the issue,
- information about long term objectives of the organisation, etc.).

## **Step 8: Planning: Milestones and Activities**

## Step 8: Planning: Milestones and Activities

SECTION 4 | HOW TO PLAN COMMUNICATION STRATEGICALLY?

### How to plan communication activities

NBSAP coordinators need to develop a plan of the necessary communication activities to realize their communication objectives.

A clear schematic overview works best, specifying who does what, when. Sometimes it can be useful to make two plans: one for the preparation of the communication activities, one for the execution phase of the communication.



In some cases the planning needs to be in great detail, in other cases a rough outline is sufficient.

During the planning phases various milestones are set. By such and such a stage this must be achieved otherwise this can or cannot happen...

#### Some Do's for planning:

- Be realistic in the amount of time needed by taking into account the time to reach the project outputs AND also the time and inputs needed for the organisational process. This is especially important when the NBSAP focal point works with partners and intermediaries.
- Allocate adequate time for planning your communication.
- Allocate time for internal communication, especially with decision makers within the agency or ministry implementing the NBSAP.
- Take into account the skills of the manager responsible for the implementation of the NBSAP communication plan.

**A good motto is  
"communicate internally  
first before externally."**

#### FREQUENTLY MADE MISTAKES IN COMMUNICATION PLANNING

- Allocating too little time: Sufficient time needs to be allocated to really benefit from communication - to be able to really discuss with stakeholders, to establish mutual trust and to make stakeholders feel that they are co-owners of a joint venture.
- Rushing into communication activities without setting realistic time frames: Good project management procedures can avoid this.

**CHECKLIST: Communication plan**

The following questions can guide you when developing a communication plan:

- Which tasks need to be performed during the preparation of the communication activities?
- Which tasks need to be performed during the execution of the communication activities?
- Which persons need to be involved, in which way, during which phases?
- Who is responsible for specific parts of the plan?
- Who coordinates the joint efforts?
- Which milestones can be identified, and who is responsible for checking?

### CHECKLIST: Failure factors in communication planning

- Insufficient use of status/progress reports.
- Inadequate project manager skills, influence or authority.
- Insufficient influence from partners.
- Poor coordination with partners.
- Lack of rapport with partners.
- Lack of project team participation in decision making.
- Lack of project team participation in major problem solving.
- Excessive structuring within the project team.
- Poor coordination with the Ministry on implementation.
- Project more complex than focal agency of Ministry ever has handled.
- Insufficient funding provided for the communication to be initiated or budget under calculated.
- Unrealistic project schedules.
- Inadequate procedures in case of changes in the plan or partnerships.

## **Step 9: Budget for communication**

## Step 9: Budget for communication

SECTION 4 | HOW TO PLAN COMMUNICATION STRATEGICALLY

### Step 9: What does it cost? How to budget communication

Most NBSAP coordinators have limited budgets. Deciding how to spend them for the best effect is an important strategic decision. People tend to be put off when initiatives are left half done or expectations are raised. Keeping your relations with your public is vital. Factoring in a budget for communication in your program and project helps assure you are not set up to fail. On the other hand it is better to start small rather than fail because of a lack of funds. There is an important axiom to consider, *Communication Quality—Time—Money are mutually dependent.*



#### What elements should be considered in calculating the budget?

- **Personnel:** how many employees need to be involved and how much time do they have to work on the project?
- **Personnel:** do you need to hire external consultants and experts? If so, how much will this cost?
- **Material costs:** What are the costs to design and produce the communication means?
- **Distribution costs:** What are the costs to distribute the communication means?
- **Media costs:** What are the costs to publish in newspapers, radio and TV?
- **Organisational costs:** What are the costs of office supplies to be used, mailing, telephone calls, copying, etc.?
- **'Safety budget':** How much should be left for unexpected costs?

#### FREQUENTLY MADE MISTAKES IN COMMUNICATION PLANNING: NO REALISTIC BUDGET

- Quite often large sums are spent on mass media campaigns, which have not much effect;

#### YET

- Most decision makers are not willing to invest money in more effective stakeholder management approaches (e.g. focus groups, round tables, multi-stakeholder processes) which might take longer than to produce a film, video or TV show, but may be less costly.

### How to communicate with a tight budget

Professional communication requires money and staff.

With a tight budget more time is needed to achieve the same quality.

If time is short as well, it is necessary to either lower ambitions and be satisfied with less quality or use a smart strategy.

#### TIPS FOR SMART COMMUNICATION ON A TIGHT BUDGET:

- A good PR strategy can lead to nation wide coverage in the mass media with little cost.
- Free publicity can be gained by providing the mass media with an exclusive story, especially if it is very news worthy, i.e. links to local events, human angle well developed.
- Use the communication channels of other organisations that want to have a more environmentally friendly image.
- Write an article for magazines which are read by your target groups.
- Use a newsworthy person to speak on your issue.

### CHECKLIST: Funding sources

National budget for implementing NBSAPs should include a budget for communication. Some sources of funding from national sources include:

- Government revenue allocations:**
  - Direct allocations from government budgets.
  - Government bonds and taxes earmarked for conservation.
  - Lottery revenues.
  - Premium-priced motor vehicle license plates.
  - Wildlife stamps.
- Grants, donations and project financing from:**
  - International organisations.
  - Bilateral cooperation.
  - Foundations, non-governmental organisations, Conservation trust funds.
  - Private sector.
- Tourism revenues:**
  - Protected area entry fees.
  - Diving and yachting fees.
  - Airport passenger fees and cruise ship fees, taxes and fines.
  - Hotel taxes.
  - Voluntary contributions by tourism operators.
- Taxes, licences, fines, royalties:**
  - Real estate tax surcharges for conservation.
  - Fishing access payments.
  - Recreational fishing access fees.
  - Oil spill fines and funds.
  - Royalties from offshore mining, gas and oil.
  - Hydroelectric power revenues.
- For-profit investments:**
  - Private sector investments promoting biodiversity conservation.
  - Biodiversity prospecting.

## **Step 10: Monitoring and Evaluation**

## Step 10: Monitoring and Evaluation

SECTION 4 | HOW TO PLAN COMMUNICATION STRATEGICALLY

### What did we accomplish? How to evaluate communication

Evaluation of the communication for NBSAP implementation is a very important step. Evaluation should be aimed at assessing *the outcomes or effects* of your communication efforts during processes of NBSAP preparation, updating and implementation.



Uganda Wetland Programme

#### Evaluation serves several purposes:

- To justify communication efforts for the leaders of your organisation and its stakeholders.
- To learn which methods are most effective and most efficient for future application.
- To learn how to organise and manage the communication process more effectively in the future.
- To define future steps after considering the results achieved.

It is difficult to evaluate the gains in knowledge, attitudes or practices if there has been no assessment at the outset of the communication planning. It is more difficult when appropriate communication indicators have not been identified when the communication objectives are formulated. Although it seems very logical, in practice evaluation is often forgotten.

#### Evaluation needs research

Research underpins evaluation. Depending on needs and (financial) possibilities research for evaluation can be:

- thorough (e.g. instance, telephone interviews of a large sample of the target groups to determine if the message has been detected, understood and effective), or
- simple (e.g. interviewing a few opinion leaders and key persons about their perception of communication efforts and the way the communication was organised).

#### ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNICATION EFFECTS IS COMPLICATED BECAUSE:

- Communication is not an isolated event and it is hard to attribute an effect from the communication.
- Most target groups are bombarded constantly with messages from a large number of senders.
- A well known saying in the field of advertising is: *'of each dollar spent on advertisement 50% is a waste, unfortunately we do not know which half.'*

#### FREQUENTLY MADE MISTAKES IN COMMUNICATION PLANNING: NO PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND NO TIME OR BUDGET FOR EVALUATION

- Correct evaluation indicators are not defined when communication objectives are set.
- Evaluation is not accommodated as part of the normal project activities with a separate budget and adequate time.

Without well planned evaluation there can be no real feedback and learning from past experiences.