



Communication Strategy for Issues in NBSAPs

Module B-7

Version 1 – July 2007

This module was prepared with funds from the GEF, through the Biodiversity Planning Support Programme (BPSP), UNEP, in collaboration with the CBD Secretariat.

Contents

Introduction to the module

1. **Why are communication, education and public awareness so important?**
2. **What steps need to be taken in developing a communication strategy about issues in NBSAPs and national reports?**
 - a. Set your goal
 - b. Assess your resources
 - c. Identify target groups
 - d. Identify partners
 - e. Choose the medium
 - f. Identify the result
 - g. Monitor performance
3. **How to implement a communications strategy?**
4. **What kinds of publicity activities can garner support for the implementation of NBSAPs from NGOs, private sector, corporate sector, general public, scientists, individual conservationists and the media?**
5. **What kind of fundraising strategies can be used for implementing the communications strategy (from country internal sources)?**

List of Acronyms

NOTE: Much of the content of this module draws from the work of the IUCN Commission on Education and Communication (CEC). Further information is available on their website at <http://www.iucn.org/themes/cec/>.

Introduction to the module

What you will learn in this module

This module discusses the importance of having a good communications strategy for National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans. It then proceeds to describe the steps that you would need to take to develop a communications strategy, including some of the practical issues that should be considered. Finally, the module also talks about fundraising to support implementing the communications strategy.

1. Why are communication, education and public awareness so important?

The importance of communication, education and public awareness cannot be underestimated. Communication is the key for gaining support for implementing activities towards the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. After all, no one wants to conserve something they do not know or care about. Biodiversity will need to become an urgent priority nationally and locally in order for the actions of NBSAPs to be implemented. This will require a solid communication, education and public awareness strategy for the national NBSAP.

A good communication strategy is of utmost importance for getting all stakeholders to collaborate towards common national and local biodiversity goals. The strategy will need to incorporate all stakeholders and levels of government whose support are required for the NBSAP to be effectively implemented, from the local to the national and international. A communication strategy may include, for example, activities aimed at schoolchildren or at small-scale fishermen in coastal villages. But it may also address government officials in different departments and representatives of various sectors. Mainstreaming across sectors, across ministries, and between levels of government will only come about through communication between these levels and entities.

It is unfortunate that even the best national strategies and reports may remain just pieces of paper on a shelf unless the priority issues they address are widely communicated to decision-makers, managers, civil society and the general public. Only through effective communication will the issues in NBSAPs and national reports truly become national priorities.

The Global Initiative on CEPA established by the CBD can provide a valuable resource in developing strategies and tools for communicating important biodiversity issues nationally and globally. CEPA can also assist in developing and implementing communication strategies relating to priority issues in NBSAPs. More information about CEPA can be found on the CBD website at:

<http://www.biodiv.org/programmes/outreach/cepa/home.shtml>.

2. What steps need to be taken in developing a communication strategy about issues in NBSAPs and national reports?

Communication strategies should be part of overall strategies for implementing policy and achieving long-term goals on conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. In fact, Decision VIII/6 of the Conference of the Parties states that CEPA strategies should be developed and implemented, wherever possible, as components of national biodiversity strategies and action plans. Messages that are anchored in larger strategies have more context and impact, and are therefore more likely to be heard and acted upon.

The following steps need to be considered when developing a communication strategy about key national biodiversity issues:

- A. Set your goal
- B. Assess your resources
- C. Identify target groups
- D. Identify partners
- E. Choose the medium
- F. Identify the result
- G. Monitor performance

These steps highlight that a clear sense of objectives, key actions and decision points, major players, timing, available resources and organizational commitments are essential components of any communication strategy. Each of the steps is discussed in more detail below.

A. Set your goal

Identify how communication fits into the overall national biodiversity strategy

The role of communication needs to be identified at an early stage of developing biodiversity strategies. In many cases this role is regarded after plans are made, reducing its potential benefits. Even though communication alone cannot solve a problem, it can be a supporting instrument in most situations when integrated in the strategy during initial planning.

The easiest way to ensure that communication is effectively integrated into the NBSAP is by establishing a communications team that will work closely together with the team drafting the NBSAP. For each priority issue in the NBSAP, the communications team can decide to what degree communications can contribute to bringing about the desired results. Can communication alone solve the issue? Or will communication be a part of a larger set of strategies, such as incentives, alternative livelihoods and legal measures? Finally, there are also situations where the communication will have no effect whatsoever in addressing the cause of a particular biodiversity issue, and where other measures are required.

Identify what are the priority issues to be communicated

Each NBSAP will contain a selection of goals and priority actions that relate to key national biodiversity issues. Some of these may involve addressing specific drivers of biodiversity loss, such as pollution. Others may involve putting in place conservation measures, such as protected areas. These goals and priority actions together make up the issues and topics around which the communication strategy will be designed. In order to effectively communicate these issues, you should fully understand each of these topics and their significance.

For each priority topic in NBSAPs and national reports, the following questions should be answered as far as possible:

- What is the character and extent of the issue?
- What are the causes of the issue? Try to distinguish technical from human factors.
- What are the targets of the policy?
- What are the possible solutions?

Step 3: Be clear and realistic about what you want to achieve through communication

When embarking on a communication process it is important to be clear about the goals. Know what you are trying to accomplish and your time line. Be as specific as possible.

The message should answer the following questions:

- Why is this issue important for your audience? How does it relate to their values and concerns? For example, a particular biodiversity issue may affect the income or quality of life of a group of people.
- What is the threat and who is responsible? For example, the threat may be the discharge of pollutants into a river by agriculture operations.
- What action will address the need and the threat? It is important to give people something to do, for example through using less polluting fertilizers in agriculture.

B. Assess your resources

A communication strategy also requires a budget, including money, staff and other resources to accomplish the identified activities. The team developing the communications strategy will need to consult with finance people to develop a realistic budget. Each activity will need to be costed, and likely prioritized into those that are essential, and those that will be implemented if additional resources become available. In addition to costing each planned activity of the communications strategy, the budget will also need to take into account salaries for any full-time or part-time staff or consultants.

Depending on the number of planned activities in the communications strategy, one or more staff members may be required to implement it. It would be useful to have a full-time communications expert dedicated to coordinating all the various communication, education and public awareness tasks. Ideally, this person should be trained in public relations and media, and be knowledgeable about biodiversity issues. Other useful expertise for the communications team may include web development experience and expertise with educational programmes. However, many countries do not have these resources to dedicate to the strategy, and it should be stressed that much can be achieved through creatively using existing resources. Depending on the nature of the tasks, some of these activities can be undertaken by in-country consultants. It might also be possible to share human resources with other related departments working on NBSAP-relevant tasks.

Some considerations are:

- a) Political – e.g. government position on NBSAP and biodiversity issues
 - Which NGO's are active in biodiversity issues in the country
 - Are there active lobbying groups?
- b) What financial resources are available
- c) What is the status of public knowledge/opinion on biodiversity
- d) What international resources are available?

Once the budget has been completed, the communications team should assess how much funding can be expected from government sources. Fundraising may be required to fill the shortfall. For some fundraising strategies, please refer to section 7 of this module.

C. Identify target groups

Next, the target groups of the communication strategy will need to be defined. Effective communication will require a good understanding of the target audience and the reason you want to communicate with them. The target group may be affected by a certain biodiversity issue, they may be responsible for the problem, or they may be in the position to influence the opinions or behaviour of others. For example, are you targeting a group of fishermen or farmers to convince them to use more sustainable practices? Or will you need to influence government officials in development-oriented departments about the importance of biodiversity for a sustainable future for your country? Or are you perhaps targeting schoolchildren through education programmes? It is likely that a communications strategy linked to a country's NBSAP will need to address multiple target audiences.

In the previous section you identified priority issues in your national NBSAP and the outcomes you would like to achieve through communication, education and public awareness. In this component, you will need to decide who are the key people, or groups of people, you need to influence in order to help reach the desired outcome for each

priority issue. This could be done in the form of a table or a matrix. If the desired outcome is, for example, a raised awareness about the importance of agricultural biodiversity for both environmental and human health, your target groups would need to include farmers (the value of changed cultivation practices for increased long-term crop yields) and consumers (the value of eating a diverse diet for health).

The matrix would then look like this:

Box 1

Priority issue	Desired outcome	Target audience of communications strategy	Key message to be communicated
Increasing sustainability of agricultural practices by increasing crop diversity and moving away from intensive practices	Raised awareness about the importance of agricultural biodiversity on environmental and human health, leading to changed behaviour patterns	Farmers	The value of changed cultivation practices for increased long-term crop yields, and thus increased income.
		Consumers	The value of eating a diverse diet for good health.

In each case, it is important to know what the target audience cares about, what their values, interests, attitudes and experiences are. Are they already aware of the problem? How much background do they have (either formal education or practical experience) in the topic you are attempting to communicate? And why should they care about your message? It is also important to consider how your audience views you, your organization and your messenger, in terms of credibility, viewpoint, etc. Finally, learn where they get their information about the world and explore those channels for getting your message out. Finding out all this information will take background research that might be undertaken through consulting experts, questionnaires, surveys etc. Hiring a professional researcher to undertake this work will provide the best results. However, any targeted information gathering will be helpful. For example, if you are considering adding a section into school curricula dealing with biodiversity, you would first need to research how this and related issues are already addressed in schools. You would also want to talk to teachers to get recommendations on how best to incorporate the topic and get the children's attention. If you need to communicate with a local community about sustainable agriculture, you will first need to spend time talking to members of that community to become familiar with their values, concerns and motivations. And if you are targeting government officials, you may need to understand how championing a particular biodiversity issue will affect their chances of re-election or career advancement.

D. Identify partners

No one person or organization can alone undertake the implementation of an entire communication strategy. The identification of partners and intermediaries is important. In many cases it is costly, complex and time consuming to communicate directly with a target group, especially when a large audience has to be reached and when many different target groups are involved. Communication in co-operation with partner organizations and through intermediaries can have the following advantages:

- It can be more economical.
- Intermediaries/partners can have databases with addresses and figures of the target group so they can be reached effectively.
- Intermediaries can have support from a large audience or can have grass root support.
- Intermediaries can have a reliable, solid image for the target group and authority based on expertise.

Some potential partners include NGOs, academics, teachers, businesses, community organizations, coalitions, watchdog groups, local chiefs, etc. Identifying potential partners and securing their support early in the development of the communications strategy is important. In this way each partner can bring to the table their own ideas and viewpoints on how best to deliver key messages to specific target groups, and these ideas can become part of a cohesive longer term communications strategy.

E. Choose the medium

Once the issues and the audience are known, the medium for the message should be defined. It is important to determine how the message will best reach the target audience. What are the points of access to this particular audience - mass media, community organizations, trade publications, church groups, special interest magazines, the web, etc.?

Since each medium has its own advantages and disadvantages, one should define which medium can most effectively relay messages. For example, the Internet may reach a worldwide audience and therefore may seem to be the perfect medium to reach audience around the world, but the Internet penetration in some countries is low. People who do not have access to the Internet will not be able to receive the message. TV has a higher number of household penetration, but most TV broadcasts are local; in this case, TV may be a good medium to reach a wide range of audience within a country, but not worldwide.

We get our information about the world from multiple channels and sources, and the news media is only one of those channels. Don't limit your message dissemination strategies to only the news media unless there is a strategic reason to do so. Feature stories, entertainment, specialty magazines, web sites, bus signs, meetings organized by local administration to reach grassroots communities, E-mail networks especially for civil society groups, organized special lectures for professionals, special lunches for private

sector, and even household food products such as breakfast cereals or milk cartons carry messages. As for news, realize that journalism is constrained by a set of values that look for controversy, heroes and villains, urgency, proximity, celebrity, and similar factors that can skew your message.

Box 2

CASE STUDY: SOME ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNICATION, EDUCATION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS INITIATIVES IN INDIA

Some of the initiatives taken by India in promoting Environment Education and Awareness (EE&A) through non-formal media and methods are:

- The National Environmental Awareness Campaign (NEAC).
- Establishment of Centres of Excellence in Environmental Education
- Establishment of National and Regional Museums of Natural History.
- Setting up of eco-clubs in schools.
- Production and dissemination of films, audio-visual and popular publications on environment.

Other points to consider:

- Use approaches appropriate to local users and conditions
- Don't adopt an overly technocratic approach
- Consider engaging various lobby groups (coalitions, watchdogs, etc.)
- Break down barriers (including pre-conceived notions) through the communication process

F. Identify the result

A communication strategy will also need to include targets that make it clear what results one wants to achieve in a certain time period. These results need to be related to the priority issues of the NBSAP. Targets also make it possible to assess if a specific outcome has been achieved (see section G). Communication targets should be SMART:

Specific,
Measurable,
Acceptable,
Realistic, and
Time related.

Communication targets can range from involvement in problem solving to attention, knowledge, awareness, motivation, behaviour and skills. In most cases, communication will be used in combination with other instruments to achieve the desired results.

Box 3

Some examples of communication, education and public awareness targets include:

- Increase in the percentage of schoolchildren who know what biodiversity is and understand its importance
- Increase in community support for a marine protected area

- More frequent consumer choice of products that have been sustainably harvested
- Increased consideration of biodiversity issues in government sectoral strategies

Each of these targets should include a specific date for its achievement. Some may be achieved in a year, others in five years time, and some may take even longer than that. In most cases, communication alone will not be enough for a target to be achieved, but will be a component of a broader strategy.

G. Monitor the performance

Finally, the results of the communication efforts need to be evaluated. Evaluation is aimed at assessing the effects of your communication efforts. Furthermore, evaluation can also be aimed at judging the processes during the preparation and execution phase. By evaluating it becomes clear which methods are most effective and most efficient. Furthermore, you learn how you can organize and manage the communication process more effectively in the future. Justification of communication efforts for the leaders of your organization and its' stakeholders is another reason to evaluate. The results of an evaluation will point out which future steps are necessary.

Box 4

CASE STUDY: ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND CANADA'S NBSAP

Education is one of the five goals of the Canadian Biodiversity Strategy, and engaging Canadians through stewardship is one of the national priorities being recommended to Ministers for national action over the next five years.

In 1998, Canada produced a report entitled Learning about Biodiversity - A First Look at the Theory and Practice of Biodiversity Education, Awareness and Training in Canada. The report provides practitioners with both an academic perspective on biodiversity education, as well as practical examples of programs developed in Canada. In 2002, a second Canadian biodiversity education guide, Learning through Real-Life Experiences, was released to help expose local communities to a range of successful conservation and sustainable use practices. By examining case studies from Eastern Ontario and highlighting the importance of collaboration, stewardship and creative solutions, this document encourages all Canadians to participate in activities which promote environmental learning. Also in 2002, a brochure entitled Conserving Biodiversity in Canada: A Journey in Progress was developed to summarize progress made over the past decade in implementing the Convention in Canada.

Source: Canada's 3rd National Report

4. How to implement a communications strategy?

Pre-testing the strategy

There are a number of issues that should be kept in mind when implementing a communications strategy. Prior to implementation, a communication strategy should be pre-tested. This will ensure that the target group understands the messages, and allows the communicator to detect unexpected interpretations of the message. If there is no time, personnel or budget available for a pre-test, conduct at least a 'disaster-check': confronting a small number of people who were not involved in the development of the communication plan with the draft mean and message. This procedure is called a disaster check because experience shows that when people are involved in developing a communication mean and message, they sometimes are 'blind' for unexpected effects.

Choosing the messenger

The choice of messenger depends on the message and the target audience. All three must complement each other. The messenger should be perceived as credible by the target group and be able to communicate with them in language that is understandable to them. For example, someone with scientific background is best equipped to address researchers, while someone speaking the local language and holding respected status in a community might best be able to communicate with local fishers.

Considering the language of communication

When communicating a message it should be kept in mind that language, tone and pitch can either open or close doors. Complicated jargon, technical language and hyperbole sets up unnecessary barriers. Simple, straightforward language reaches a broader audience. Anecdotes, i.e. real, human stories will illustrate and amplify the message. As for tone, preaching and anything that smacks of righteousness will likely be off-putting. Similarly, messages about impending doom and disaster need to be tempered. As for pitching a message that will hit home, help your audience identify their personal reason (health, well-being, livelihood, family, etc.) to care about an issue rather than ask them to care about abstract social good. And remember, hope is more compelling than despair. This means that it is important to provide solutions, options, and some positive angles for hope.

Images, as well as words help in telling the story, but should not overshadow the facts. It might also be helpful to distil the essence of the message into a slogan, a media "hook" or a soundbite that succinctly communicates your essential action.

Box 5

CASE STUDY: Program “Let’s Take Care of Brazil through the Schools” [Vamos Cuidar do Brasil com as Escolas] in Brazil

In 2003, the Ministry of the Environment launched the campaign “Let’s Take Care of Brazil through the National Environmental Conference”, with adult and juvenile versions. The National Youth-Juvenile Environmental Conference, conducted in partnership with MEC, had the participation of almost 16,000 schools, where approximately six million people, among them students, teachers and communities, debated environmental issues. This movement included, in addition to regular junior and middle schools, schools for people with special needs, and schools from the following community types: indigenous, quilombola, riverside, coastal, settlement, and fishing communities. The engineering of this implementation capillarity resulted in the continuation of this program as a policy for environmental capacity building of the Education Secretariats, reinforcing the role of the trainer-teacher as a sort of “teacher’s teacher”. Thus, the development of a series of actions was proposed within the schools which spontaneously conducted Environmental Conferences. The action named “Let’s Take Care of Brazil through the Schools” became a program, which aims at a natural unfolding of this mobilization, and offers a response to the demand of detailing the theme, presented by involved parties. This movement coincided with the conclusion of the Environmental Specialization Program [PAMA - Programa de Aperfeiçoamento em Meio Ambiente] evaluation, which mapped the continuity of environmental training of trainer-teachers from a systemic point of view, based on four structuring actions: National Environmental Conference, Continuous Training of Teachers and Students, Computer Literacy based on Easily Understood Scientific Language, Chico Mendes Education. The education material adopted for training teachers and to support activities at schools was “Sustainable Consumption: education handbook” [Consumo Sustentável: manual de educação] (Idec / MMA / MEC 2004).

Additional information at <http://www.mec.gov.br/se/educacaoambiental/pdf/cuidar.pdf>

Source: Brazil’s 3rd National Report

5. What kinds of publicity activities can garner broad societal support for the implementation of NBSAPs?

The key for getting public support for implementing NBSAP priority activities is to ensure that everyone has a role to play. This role may be managing a backyard or local park, taking part in a conservation-related work program, participating in a statutory planning process, contributing to research, survey and monitoring programs, or otherwise contributing at a local, regional, national or international level. Involving communities, NGOS, private sector, corporate sector, scientists and the general public in NBSAP implementation creates a sense of ownership. This ownership is important for keeping biodiversity in the public consciousness.

Box 6

Some examples of activities that will garner support for implementing NBSAPs include:

- Development and publication of national “**State of Biodiversity**” reports.
- Developing and promoting public information and education programs, in consultation with community groups (especially those involved in the management of biological diversity), by preparing **accessible personal action guides** aimed at specific rural and urban environments and explaining the ways in which individuals and groups can help to conserve biological diversity.
- Providing **information to allow consumers to make informed choices about products, services and activities** that may affect the conservation and management of biological diversity, including information on taxation and other institutional incentives that encourage action conducive to the conservation of biological diversity.
- Providing **tailored information on biological diversity for government agencies, land managers, landowners and specific industries** that rely on some component of biological diversity.
- Encouraging the **media networks to continue producing and broadcasting programs** related to biological diversity and its conservation.
- Expanding **biological diversity studies in educational curricula**.
- Support and encourage **further professional development activities** to equip teachers with the skills and understanding needed to include the scientific, economic and social aspects of biological diversity conservation in their education programs.
- Hold **essay competitions** on a biodiversity-relevant theme targeting students or the general public
- Encourage **'hands on' educational programs**, such as field days and exhibitions on topical issues, that involve the wider community as part of the educational process in biological diversity conservation.
- Increasing **community involvement in research and management activities** relating to protected areas and vegetation remnants and in biological diversity programs, particularly those involving survey, revegetation and rehabilitation.
- Ensuring that **public participation** is a meaningful component in planning and environmental impact assessment procedures that involve biological diversity conservation.
- Developing and encouraging the use of an **accessible clearing-house mechanism** to disseminate relevant information prepared by government, research and educational institutions, industry, non-government organizations and individuals.
- Use of **good will ambassadors** for environmental issues, such as local or international celebrities
- Organizing **special days for parliamentary area representatives** (policy makers) to learn about biodiversity issues in their respective constituencies.

Finally, creativity may be one of the most important ingredients in a communication strategy. While the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity is important, the issues involved may not always be interesting. Creative thinking is required to find a way to bring the issues alive.

6. What kind of fundraising strategies can be used for implementing the communications strategy (from country internal sources)?

Ideally, the national budget for implementing NBSAP priority activities should also allocate money for implementing the communication strategy. It is therefore important that a realistic budget for the communications strategy has been prepared and presented as part of the overall funding requirements for the NBSAP (see section 4 B).

The first task is then to assess how much of the communication strategy can be implemented from the government budget allocated for the NBSAP. If there are shortfalls, it may be possible to use existing staff and resources to cover some of these. Resources between related projects might be shared. For example, an already funded sustainable tourism initiative might be expanded to include biodiversity awareness raising. An existing public education programme at a local park or zoo could be revamped to educate school children about biodiversity.

If new funding is still needed, try looking for corporate and foundation grants while you are building a donor base of individuals or organizations that support the objectives of the NBSAP. Grants are available from national, regional and international organizations, and from the private sector. In attracting funding, it is important to make the NBSAP and its goals well known in the community and within donor organizations. Much of the success of fundraising depends on building relationships. Prospective donors are those who care about the cause of biodiversity, and have come to believe that the NBSAP is an essential tool for achieving national biodiversity goals. Maintaining visibility and a long-term relationship with such donors is an important fundraising strategy.

Organizing special events can raise funds and increase the visibility of NBSAP priorities. Some examples of special events include shows of children's artwork, benefit auctions, musical performances, donors' dinners etc.

Speaker's tours of chambers of commerce, civic and community organizations, service clubs, churches etc. might also be useful in raising the profile of the NBSAP and attracting additional funding. Similarly, the business and corporate sector can be reached through activities such as business lunches, talks in business social events, etc.

Maintaining visibility and "lobbying" may also be required to ensure the allocation of government funding for the NBSAP. Many governments have special funding sources (such as bonds and taxes earmarked for conservation, lottery revenues or wildlife stamps) that can potentially be used for NBSAP related activities. Tourism revenues provide another governmental funding source for biodiversity-relevant activities.

The role of the various sectors in helping implement some of the NBSAP objectives should not be ignored. Teaming with, for example, the fisheries sector to produce educational materials related to sustainable fishing practices may foster a mutually beneficial relationship that can fund some aspects of NBSAP while contributing to the larger goal of mainstreaming biodiversity concerns into sectoral strategies.

Box 7

CASE STUDY: Environmental Education Grants Program in Australia

The Environmental Education Grants Program in Australia funds activities, which support the Australian Government's objective of improving the community's capacity to protect the environment. Grants are intended to complement the Environment and Heritage Portfolio's environmental education activities. Their aim is to support sustainable development in Australia through improved approaches to education and learning for sustainability. More about the Environmental Education Grants Program can be found at <http://www.deh.gov.au/education/programs/index.html>.

Source: Australia's 3rd National Report

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What kind of communication strategy is associated with your country's NBSAP?
- How did you go about designing this strategy?
- What kinds of resources (human and financial) were available to you?
- Do you have any experiences in fundraising for the strategy?
- Do you feel that the strategy has been successful in having produced demonstrable results?
- If not, what would you do differently next time?

References and sources of further information

IUCN recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the CBD Secretariat to develop the toolkit for national CBD focal points. The toolkit will include both a manual and an electronic version, and will be a "how-to guide" for holding workshops that result in concrete strategies for using CEPA methods and tools to market biodiversity to other sectors, and mainstream biodiversity into the work of other sectors. This toolkit will greatly contribute to the content of this module.

List of Acronyms

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEPA	Communication Education and Public Awareness
COP	Conference of the Parties (to the CBD)
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan