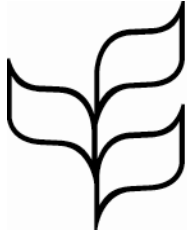




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INFORMAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON
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PUBLIC AWARENESS

Montreal, Canada, 28-29 July 2016

**SYNTHESIS OF SELECTED MESSAGING APPROACHES FOR BIODIVERSITY
COMMUNICATION**

Note by the Executive Secretary

1. In decision XII/2 C, the Executive Secretary was requested, subject to the availability of resources, to carry out a number of activities in support of communication, education and public awareness, and of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity, including conducting a workshop, on the basis of a review of existing knowledge and a gap analysis and in collaboration with representatives of different stakeholder groups and taking into account behavioural analysis studies, to develop and utilize messaging approaches for the specific target groups in the context of the different Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and to report on the outcomes of the workshop to the Conference of the Parties at its thirteenth meeting;
2. The Executive Secretary is circulating the present document for the information of participants in the Messaging workshop organized in the context of the meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee on Communication, Education and Public Awareness, scheduled for 28 and 29 July 2016.
3. The document is a synthesis of four approaches to biodiversity communication. These are meant to inform the discussion by the workshop on messaging approaches. The document was prepared by the Secretariat, with content drawn from a summary of research being undertaken for the CEPA toolkit.

SYNTHESIS OF SELECTED MESSAGING APPROACHES FOR BIODIVERSITY COMMUNICATION

Introduction

A variety of approaches are available for the creation of communication and messaging strategies for biodiversity. In the context of the Convention on Biological Diversity, several actors and stakeholders have provided analyses which help illustrate possible approaches to this. The present document provides a summary of four of these:

- ICLEI – Guidelines for Local Government Biodiversity Communication
- CEC of IUCN – How to Tell a Love Story
- Futerra Communications – “Branding Biodiversity”
- Jane Elder – presentation at the AAAS meeting in 2009

These summaries are meant to guide and inform discussions on approaches to messaging under the Convention during the workshop. They are not seen as the only approaches to the topic.

ICLEI - Guidelines for Local Government Biodiversity Communication

ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability has produced materials and methodologies for their members to use as they create local communication campaigns. Their guidelines are summarized below:

Communication processes must be customized for particular contexts, needs and audiences. CEPA (C-ommunication, E-ducation, P-ublic, A-wareness) staff should decide on the best approach for each unique situation using the following guidelines.

Guidelines for Local Government Communication on Biodiversity

Information must be relevant and appropriate with regards to context; the message should seek to connect with the context, with an intrinsic focus on the main drivers of change in biodiversity. People who can achieve tangible solutions to biodiversity issues should be targeted first, as opposed to those who are easiest to reach. The content of the message should aim at enhancing CEPA priorities, as well as to help build partnerships and alliances for long-term conservation, sustainability and effective management of biodiversity.

Communication needs to build trust, understanding and shared agreements with organizations, companies and communities as to assist conservation efforts and highlight the contribution of biodiversity and ecosystems services to human-well-being as a whole. Each message should strive to be positive and inspiring. If this is not feasible, the message should be constructive and give options for action as opposed to fear-mongering. Each message should be mindful of the intended audiences' interests, needs, cultural practices and traditions.

Guidelines for Local Government Environmental Communications Designers

The communications designers should ensure strategic internal and external communications by conducting a prior CEPA assessment of communication needs within the local government and among its stakeholders. Internal and external communications sometimes involve separate target audiences, objectives and messages, and the sender should be aware of these differences. The designer should know the issues and be clear on the intended role of communication.

The designers should also understand the relevant stakeholders and target audiences, including their existing knowledge, attitude, level of education, cultural and socio-economic context, language, lifestyle, interests and their involvement in the problem and solutions, how they perceive the issues and what will likely motivate them to action. Relevant laws, policies and regulations need to be complied with at all times. The required capacity and budget to implement CEPA activities should be realistic. The chosen communications channels should be selected carefully, as each individual channel impacts the audience in different ways.

It is vital to set communication targets and timelines, which are different from biodiversity targets, although related. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are to be built into communications strategies and once evaluations are conducted, new targets are set for future improvement. Consider the city's communication, education and public awareness raising activities in relation to each other; they can be complementary and often overlap. Form partnerships and networks with other agencies in order to reach broader audiences and overcome lack of capacity. Communications can also play the role of securing more networks and partnerships for other biodiversity and CEPA programmes, by helping to enhance the city's credibility among existing and potential partners and providing channels to reach them.

How to Tell a Love Story

(https://www.dropbox.com/s/y4w4yn48xtdt53c/how_to_tell_a_love_story_an_introduction.pdf?dl=0)

How to tell a love story is the second part of the messaging/outreach campaign created by the Commission on Education and Communication of IUCN which began in 2010 with the video “Love not Loss.” How to tell a love story provides a methodology of the ways to create positive stories on behavior change. The message is summarized below:

The best way to effectively convey a message is to avoid negative language (what went wrong; extinction, habitat loss or resource scarcity) and instead focus on the positive messages; remember what we loved in nature in the first place.

The question is: how do we help people fall in love again?

- Personalizing nature

By building a personal connection between people and animals and making the issue locally relevant, “I don’t eat turtle eggs” campaign shifted public attitude across Nicaragua

- Humanizing nature

By talking about the Sundarbans forest in human terms (mother figure), the “Motherlike Sundarbans” campaign helps people to relate to it and the challenges it faces

- Publicizing positive actions to protect nature

By mobilizing people to survey declining bird species, the Big Garden Birdwatch raises awareness of millions more

Video on the approach available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rrz8nxzo_nw

Communicating Biodiversity Presentation by Jane Elder at AAAS in 2009

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/a3a9t53qf239zau/Elder%20AAAS%20Presentation.pdf?dl=0>

Jane Elder is the Executive Director of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, and also teaches as the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She was the Executive Director of “The Biodiversity Project,” from 1995 to 2005, where she looked at ways to connect the public to the issue of biodiversity loss. This presentation was given at the 2009 meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Communication is meant to build....

- **Awareness** of the topic, the challenge, the need for responsive action.
- **Knowledge** to better understand and make good decisions
- **Concern/Caring**
- **Motivation** to Act
- **Capability** to Act

Connecting with the Public

Strategic Approaches to Communications

- Frames
 - Understanding is frame—based, not fact based; a story must first make sense, then the facts are assimilated. People rely on concepts and values to assign meaning.
- Values
 - Values with strong resonance for biodiversity include:
 - o Family and responsibility to family
 - o Future Generations (leaving them a healthy planet)
 - o God’s Creation
- Story-based communication
 - Uses classic story telling to provide context and meaning for an issue and draws on familiar cultural myths/stories to draw parallels to issues of the day
- Social marketing for behavior change
 - o Identify barriers and how to overcome them
 - o Obtain commitments (pledges, signatures, etc.)
 - o Model behavior
 - o Provide prompts
 - o Point of experience
 - o Establishing norms
 - o Financial incentives & disincentives
 - o Personalized communications

Lessons Learned about biodiversity frames

- Avoid the “Science box” frame where this problem is seen as scientific and technical and thus experts will solve it
- Avoid the “Catastrophe” frame where all is loss and tragedy, thus hopeless and disempowering.
- Avoid reliance on primarily utilitarian frames, e.g. “nature makes medicine” because the research shows that values for family, future generations and God’s creation are more potent for most Americans.

The term “biodiversity” itself is difficult for some people to understand and deals with multiple concepts, adding to the complexity. Another issue is the use of precise terms such as gene pools, populations, etc. as opposed to “Life itself”; incremental disparate actions get lost and “the whole” doesn’t get communicated. Instead, we should simplify to core concepts like “life on Earth” and define biodiversity for the context and setting, describing the big picture and how specific threats or actions connect. Keep the facts simple and related to people’s daily lives and experience; lead with values, follow with facts. If used correctly, images can effectively reinforce the message. Most importantly, give people something positive that they can do to make a difference, make the action easy, authentic, painless and rewarding, and provide feedback when possible. Things to avoid when it comes to language: eco-speak, complex numbers, acronyms, jargon.

We must identify and tell the “big story”. Tell stories that connect the dots to everyday experiences, put a human face on a human story. For example, real lives saved (drugs, flood protection), real action in real communities (rain gardens, habitat restoration, etc.), family Heroes, etc.

Mediums and channels have gone global (the Web) and micro-targeted (niche markets/data mapping). Social networks have exploded but biodiversity outreach/action has just scratched the surface. On the other hand, news media is still important for agenda setting, but fewer people read newspapers every day. Most people are still getting primary news about the environment from local television news.

Effective communications strategies all have the following in common: broader strategic goals (not a single issue), they are audience-based, address both cognitive and affective issues to create meaning, provide personal context, anticipate barriers and address them, and evaluate the strategy and adapt accordingly.

Branding Biodiversity

https://www.dropbox.com/s/7dzv54t92c45epw/Branding_Biodiversity.pdf?dl=0

Futerra Communications is a company specializing in sustainability communications and branding. They provided the branding and campaign for the 2010 International Year of Biodiversity. As a result of research conducted for this year, they produced “Branding Biodiversity,” which looked at the new ways to reach out to audiences with different predispositions with regard to Biodiversity. The summary of their short booklet is below:

If you want to save biodiversity, you need to get inside people’s heads. We need to find out what values they hold, and how they perceive their relationship with nature. Understanding the psychological and sociological response to your product is the first step to building a powerful brand.

There are two misconceptions about how people think that are chiefly responsible for undermining the impact of current biodiversity messages. The first is an assumption that people are rational; our audiences are emotional rather than rational. The second is the belief that people will value biodiversity for its own sake. In real-world everyday decision-making, biodiversity has no intrinsic value, the challenge therefore is to develop biodiversity messages that appeal to the majority of the population; humanists and egoists.

Current biodiversity messaging uses four main themes: loss, love, need, and action. Most of the messaging related to biodiversity is currently based on loss. ‘Biodiversity’ and ‘extinction’ are almost automatically communicated together. From the Red List to the plight of the rainforest, the ‘biodiversity loss’ message is everywhere. Messages based on awe and wonder are used by advertisers, therapists, artists and campaigners alike, because awe for nature captures our imagination, and our attention. A more recent message is the tangible economic value of biodiversity. From ecosystem services like soil nutrition or tourism revenue, to the trillions of dollars that biodiversity ‘gifts’ agriculture, pharmaceuticals and other industries every year. Biodiversity conservation requires people to act. Action messages ask people to do something; plant a tree, sign a petition, etc. The most effective type of ‘action’ messages are ones where the audience feels involved, the opportunity to sell action in a way that puts biodiversity back in people’s lives, and makes it relevant and rewarding.

Since the majority of our audiences aren’t either rational or biocentric, messages based on the concept of ‘loss’ of biodiversity should be avoided. Instead, the tone of the messages should be more focused on ‘love’. Research on adults who care about biodiversity reveals the most important factor behind taking action is an emotionally-powerful childhood experience of nature. When people experience a memorable natural encounter as a child, that experience can be reawakened as an adult.

For the public, messages that focus on the economic value of nature are sometimes interesting, often impressive, but rarely a motivation to actually change behaviours. For most people who have an emotional connection to nature, the economic argument doesn’t make it stronger, it undermines it.

However, this type of messaging is essential for policymakers and business. For these audiences, the ‘love’ message is too soft, and the economic rationale is a far stronger incentive for change. The ‘need’ message is being communicated more often and more effectively to a business and policy audience. However, these audiences are passing the same message on to the public, as part of their political argument or marketing, and then it becomes ineffective. Policy audiences need to learn to use the ‘love’ message with the general public.

The formula:

Love + Action = Public Change

Need + Action = Policy Change

- **Personalize**
- **Humanize**
- **Publicize**

Document can be downloaded at: <http://www.wearefuterra.com/our-projects/branding-biodiversity/>
