

APPENDIX 4

Guidelines for Local Government Biodiversity Communication

Compiled with reference to the *Local Biodiversity Communication, Education & Public Awareness Strategy and Action Plan Guidelines*, prepared by the ICLEI Cities Biodiversity Center, May 2012.

The terms associated with CEPA are:

C for communicating, connecting, capacity building, change in behaviour

E for educating, empowerment (learning and professional updating)

P for public, public awareness, public participation, policy instrument

A for awareness, action, action research.

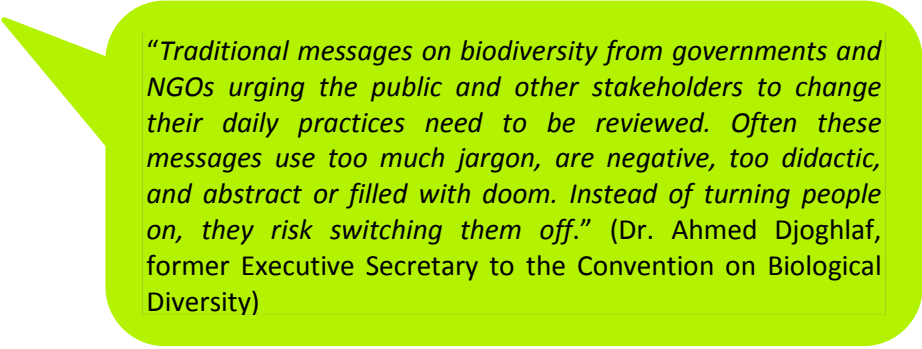
“To create deep change, we must find ways of managing communication and learning across cultures and disciplines, and collectively creating and managing new knowledge for sustainable solutions.” (Keith Wheeler, Chair: IUCN Commission on Education and Communication)

Communication processes must be customized for particular contexts, needs and audiences. The following guidelines are aimed at helping CEPA staff decide on the best approach for each unique situation.

Local Government Communication Processes on Biodiversity should be:

1. Relevant and appropriate to the situation and the context.
2. Seek to connect with the context in which they are situated and the topics under consideration.
3. Targeted and focused - addressing the main drivers of change in biodiversity, and the people who can really make a difference to solve the issue, rather than those who are easiest to reach.
4. Aimed at enhancing capacity to deal with CEPA priorities, encouraging local stewardship of biodiversity and helping to build a network of partnerships and alliances for the long-term conservation, sustainable use and effective management of biodiversity.
5. Helping to build trust, understanding and shared agreements with organisations, companies and communities which can assist local government in conserving and sustainably using biodiversity.

6. Helping to highlight the contribution of biodiversity and ecosystem services to human well-being, poverty eradication, and sustainable development, as well as the economic, social, and cultural values of biodiversity.
7. Where possible, positive and inspiring, and where it is not possible to be positive, helpful, providing options for action to address or appropriately respond to dire news.
8. Flexible, mindful of and responsive to the particular context and intended recipients, their interests and needs, cultural practices and traditions.



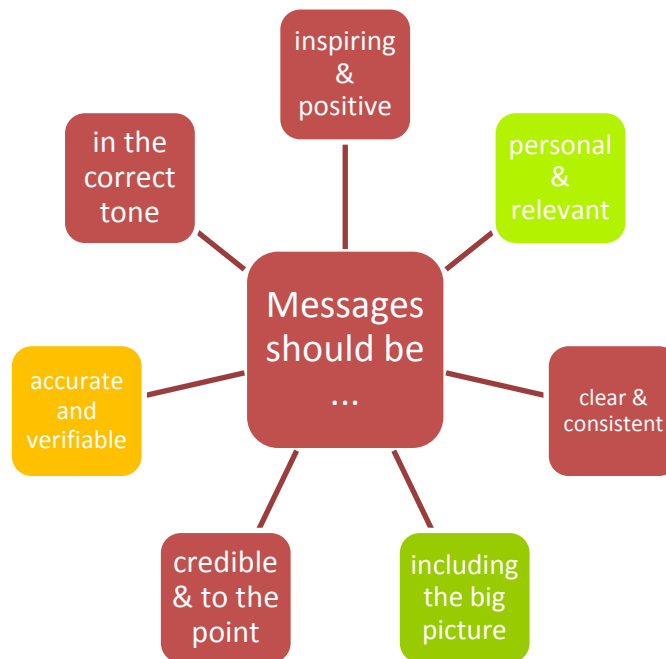
“Traditional messages on biodiversity from governments and NGOs urging the public and other stakeholders to change their daily practices need to be reviewed. Often these messages use too much jargon, are negative, too didactic, and abstract or filled with doom. Instead of turning people on, they risk switching them off.” (Dr. Ahmed Djoghlaif, former Executive Secretary to the Convention on Biological Diversity)

At the 2008 IUCN World Congress in Barcelona a *Workshop on communicating biodiversity: what works and what doesn't* provided the following research-based rules for effective communication:

Making Communication Work – 10 Rules¹:

1. People are not rational
2. Challenge people's habits
3. Use easy and accessible words
4. Make the message relevant, make people understand that they are targeted
5. There is a lack of trust in messages; communicate through credible channels
6. Cognitive discernment: no negative messages, fear gets the opposite effect than intended
7. Create a personal link between the person and nature (emotions) – fundamentals of biodiversity
8. Make sustainable development so desirable that people will find it 'normal'; the need is not so much to understand biodiversity, but to understand what behavior has the power to change.
9. Achieve broad consensus
10. The message should be sustainable and last in the long-term.

¹ Ed Gillespie, Futerra Sustainability Communications, www.futerra.co.uk/downloads/10-Rules.pdf



Local governments' environmental communication designers should:

1. Ensure *strategic* internal and external communications by, for example, conducting a prior CEPA assessment of communication needs within the local government and among its stakeholders. Consider planning internal and external communication separately, as both are important but may involve separate target audiences, objectives and messages and different communications channels.

2. Know the issue/s and be clear on the intended role of communication:

"Sound science is fundamental to our understanding of the consequences of biodiversity loss. It also has the potential to be a powerful incentive for conservation action. But only if you understand what it says. And only if you care about what it means. The challenge for biodiversity communicators across the world is to 'translate' complex science into compelling messages that will inspire the action required to conserve biodiversity. Success lies in understanding the communications formula that turns science into action" (IUCN, p.1²).

3. 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 issue/s and what will likely motivate them to action. To identify and learn about the target audience, a variety and combination of research methods may be used including: desk-top based research of existing

² IUCN. *Communicating biodiversity: Bringing science to life through Communication, Education and Public Awareness*. http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/cepa_brochure_web.pdf

information, interviews, questionnaires, web-based surveys, focus groups and expert interviews.

4. Understand that communications is not just about overloading an audience with facts and information, and is mindful of the 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*” .

Frequently made mistakes in communication planning, include³:

- 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.

5. Comply and be consistent with relevant laws, policies and regulations including internal communications and branding guidelines.
6. Realistic in terms of the required capacity and budget to implement CEPA activities.
7. Determine which communication channels or tools (means) are most suitable. They can have a significant impact on the effectiveness of the communication, and decisions should take into account the communication target, target audience, credibility of the communications means, budget, capacity and your experience with the channels. Examples of communications tools and channels are: brochures; videos; events; campaigns; workshops; mass media like newspapers, radio, television; face-to-face meetings; websites and social media sites. Online social networks (like Facebook and Twitter) are increasingly being used to gather support for campaigns, share news and information and capture public reactions and attitudes to those activities. Consider using a mix of tools / channels to most effectively achieve communication targets.

Checklist for selecting communication tools and channels⁴:

- Does the tool or channel help reach the communication targets?
- Does it appeal to the target group?
- Is it credible?
- Is the message reinforced by the tool or channel?
- Can it be easily accessed by this particular target group?
- What is the most effective reach and impact of the tool or channel that suits the budget?
- What is past experience with this tool/channel and its impact?
- Always pre-test the message and the tool/channel and check that the message is not being interpreted in an unexpected or unintended way.

³ Hesselink F.J. *et al.*, 2007. *Communication, Education and Public Awareness: A Toolkit for the Convention on Biological Diversity*. Montreal, Canada.

⁴ Adapted from Hesselink *et al.*, *ibid*, p.269.

8. Set communication targets and timelines; benchmark against best practice. Communication targets are different from biodiversity conservation targets, although related. To formulate realistic communication targets, it is important to have already identified the issue, the target audience and the target audience's knowledge, attitude and behavior towards the issue, as the communication targets would depend on this information. Potential communication targets include: providing knowledge, changing perceptions, creating new lifestyle choices or practices. An example is: *60% of CEOs in extractive industries within the city should integrate biodiversity conservation and sustainable use issues into their business plans and objectives.*
9. Build monitoring and evaluation (M&E) into communication strategies and once evaluations have been conducted, set targets for improvement. Use the *LAB CEPA Evaluation Toolkit* to decide what the aims and objectives for the planned M&E will be, prioritise what will be monitored and evaluated, what methods will be used and what the indicators for success will be, the timeframes and intervals for M&E, the responsible parties, both internally and externally, and the capacity and budget to implement.
10. Consider the city's communication, education and public awareness raising activities in relation to each other; they can be complementary and often overlap. Collaborative planning between City staff will help to avoid duplication that would waste scarce resources, and can increase synergy and impact.
11. 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. Networking can take many forms – including online, face-to-face and electronic networking; giving presentations at events; attending staff meetings about the status of biodiversity activities; sending out biodiversity newsletters; and participating in online seminars.

The following principles guided the development and implementation of City of Edmonton's Local Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan (LBSAP, p.18) and are helpful in planning communications (emphasis added):

- Build capacity for ecological protection in Edmonton.
- Engage the community in conservation and management of natural areas *to harness existing local knowledge and raise awareness.*
- Think continentally and regionally, and plan locally.
- Align with existing conservation plans, aiming to be additive rather than redundant.
- Use best available science.
- Balance public interest with property rights.
- Promote Edmonton's ecological network as a context to which urban development must be tailored, not the opposite.
- Embrace innovative approaches to conservation.