NAP Global Network

Coordinating
Climate-Resilient
Development

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Christian Ledwell

sNAPshot
Strategic Communications for National Adaptation Plan (NAP) Processes

Overview Brief

This Overview Brief introduces the topic of strategic communications to support National Adaptation Plan (NAP) processes. A number of separate *sNAPshot* briefs provide further detail on approaches specific countries have taken to strategic communications in their NAP process.

Countries preparing for climate change impacts are developing and implementing their individual National Adaptation Plan (NAP) processes, each of which is intended to be flexible and iterative while identifying the priorities of a broad range of stakeholders. The myriad of potential impacts of climate change mean that a diversity of actors should be involved in all countries' NAP processes, making clear and purposeful communication with stakeholders within and outside of government a necessity. A strategic approach to communications—in which key messages are tailored for priority audiences and delivered through the most appropriate communications channels to reach those audiences—can improve how governments engage citizens throughout their NAP process. It can ensure that their views are reflected in the adaptation actions that are prioritized, while engaging stakeholders in the implementation and the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of these adaptation actions.

Countries have taken diverse approaches to their communications activities around NAP processes. Some communications activities have focused on communications about climate change adaptation and the NAP process per se, with goals such as raising awareness of climate change to promote

changes in behaviour. Other activities have focused on communications that help implement climate change adaptation, such as providing increased access to information and communications technology, or improving communication of weather data and climate information, including early warning systems.
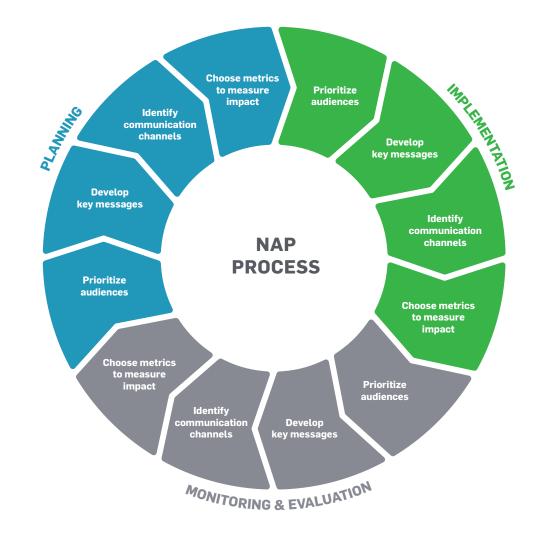
This overview *sNAPshot* focuses on the rationale for communications about climate change adaptation and the NAP process, as well as suggested approaches to strategic communications.

Strategic Communications for the NAP Process

Strategic communications is an approach that organizations use to define the "what" and the "how" of their communications (Steyn, 2003). It involves the creation of both a long-term, continuous strategy as well as shorter-term communications campaigns on specific topics. Strategic communications can help support the achievement of goals at different moments of the NAP process, including initiation and development of the NAP process, implementation of the adaptation actions identified through the NAP process, and communicating the results of adaptation actions during monitoring and evaluation.

As illustrated in Figure 1, at different stages of the NAP process countries can take a strategic approach to communications by prioritizing audiences, developing key messages, identifying communications channels and measuring the impact of their communications activities. Ways in which countries can apply this approach are explored in the remainder of this *sNAPshot*.

Figure 1. Example of how strategic communications could be aligned with stages of the NAP process.

Figure 2. Stakeholder Influence-Interest Grid

Source: Adapted from Overseas Development Institute (n.d.) and Ackermann and Eden (2011).

Prioritizing Audiences

Planned adaptation to climate change requires the active involvement of many stakeholder groups. This includes government decision makers who prioritize the adaptation actions to be implemented, civil society groups who will be impacted by these decisions, and private sector actors whose businesses may be affected.

At each stage of the NAP process (planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation), priority audiences may shift. For instance, influencing government decision makers may be the priority during the planning stage, while reaching civil society and the private sector may be a greater priority during the implementation stage of the NAP process.

The identification of priority audiences should be done at each of the different moments of the NAP process. One tool to help prioritize audiences is the Influence-Interest grid (Eden & Ackermann, 2011; ODI Toolkit, n.d.)

illustrated in Figure 2. This stakeholder mapping exercise can help answer questions such as: Who is already championing the NAP process? Are there influential actors who can be persuaded to support the NAP process? Are there groups that support climate change action that have less influence, but whose support can be leveraged if they are kept informed?

Developing Key Messages and Message Supports

Once priority audiences have been identified for one or all stages of the NAP process, key messages should be developed for each of them. The language used for messages should be tailored for the target audience. In general, messages should be concise and in plain language, avoiding technical jargon and acronyms where possible. However, more technical language may be appropriate in cases where the target audience is intended to be technical.

Key messages may begin as very broad (e.g., "We need to adapt to climate change"), and then be more tailored to each target audience. Communications planning should also identify message supports. These include

- **Statistics:** Meaningful numbers that illustrate the scale of climate change impacts in the national context and the benefits of adaptation.
- **Human interest stories:** Real-life stories about individuals who are being impacted by climate change and are adapting can make climate change less abstract and more relatable.
- **Memorable phrases:** Sound bites, slogans and catchphrases that can help make the messaging more impactful.

Key messages and message supports should be developed considering audiences' values, interests and motivations, as well as their degree of familiarity with the issue of climate change adaptation.

For example, if a country's Ministry of Finance is the target audience for a specific communications campaign, setting out a strong case using quantitative data about the costs associated with climate change impacts and the potential financial benefits of climate change adaptation may be an effective way to frame the key messages.

For a campaign focused on agricultural producers affected by climate change, a human-interest story focused on an individual farming family that has built their resilience to drought through rainwater harvesting may be an effective way to frame why the country is engaged in the NAP process.

Photo by UN Women/Ryan Brown (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Identifying Communications Channels

Communications channels should be chosen based on an analysis of the types of media being used by priority audiences.

For instance, if government decision makers are the priority audience, policy briefs or articles in influential print media may be the most appropriate channels. If the goal is awareness raising among civil society groups, broadcast (e.g., radio and television) and social media may be most appropriate.

Geographic range of the audience should also be considered. If the audience is local, an interview on local radio and television may be an effective channel to use. For an international audience, internet-based media will be more likely to reach audiences in different countries.

In addition to traditional broadcast and print media, there are an increasing number of options for creating and distributing one's own content through new media channels such as social media, podcasting and blogging platforms. Using new media has associated challenges (e.g., building an audience, achieving professional quality) and risks (e.g., greater likelihood of dealing with negative reactions and criticism). However, significant benefits are also possible through new media, notably the opportunity to better understand stakeholders' views of climate change adaptation needs and the NAP process through dialogue.

Box 2. Considerations in Selecting Communications Channels for the NAP Process

Some initial questions to consider when choosing communications channels are presented below. This list is by no means complete.

National stakeholders

- Are key documents related to the NAP process available to national stakeholders via a **website** or **in print**?
- Is there **communications capacity** within government to create communications products (e.g., press releases, policy briefs, information brochures, videos, webinars, social media)?
- Have government officials **built relationships with journalists** from print and broadcast media?
- Has the government identified **spokespeople** for the NAP process? Are these spokespeople prepared to react if contacted by journalists for an interview, and can these spokespeople be engaged to proactively create media about the NAP process (e.g., opinion pieces in print or digital media, public service announcement videos)?
- Has the government identified **civil society champions** for the NAP process?
- Is **national climate change data** available to the public?
- Are resources on climate change adaptation available in the **diverse languages** spoken by different stakeholder groups?
- Have the communications channels that are **accessible to and used by specific stakeholder groups** (such as women, rural communities, the poor, youth) been considered in the design of outreach activities?

International stakeholders

- Has the **NAP document** been shared with the UNFCCC Secretariat and disseminated via UNFCCC's NAP Central?
- Are there **lessons about the NAP process** that the country can share with their international peers (e.g., policy briefs, videos, webinars, social media) to raise the profile of the country's progress on adaptation?
- Which communications channels can most effectively engage **diaspora communities**?

Choosing Metrics to Measure Impact

Communications goals should ideally meet SMART criteria; i.e., they should be **s**pecific, **m**easurable, **a**ttainable, **r**elevant to the objectives and **t**ime-bound. Deciding on metrics to measure the impact of communications campaigns should ideally be done before their activities are underway. The impact of communications activities will be specific to the communications channels that are being used (e.g., for websites, the number of visitors may be the metric; for radio, number of listeners; for electronic newsletters, the percentage of emails that were opened). For measuring awareness raising efforts, public surveys on understanding of climate change issues can be a valuable means of monitoring progress. Activities that aim to change certain behaviours (e.g., encouraging rainwater harvesting) typically require different, more targeted surveys.

Developing a Communications Strategy for the NAP Process

Like the NAP process itself, strategic communications is an iterative process that is most effective when tailored to a country's unique national context.

Developing a focused communications strategy—with priority audiences, key messages, communications channels and metrics for measuring impact—can help governments engage internal and external stakeholders in the NAP process and make progress toward achieving its urgent and vital goal of preparing societies for the impacts of climate change.

References and Further Reading

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About the NAP Global Network and sNAPshots series

The NAP Global Network is a group of individuals and institutions who are coming together to enhance bilateral support for the NAP process in developing countries. Based on experiences and lessons shared through the activities of the NAP Global Network, sNAPshots highlight examples of how countries are currently approaching different aspects of the NAP process. If interested in participating the NAP Global Network, please sign up online.

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