



# COMMUNICATIONS AND Chapter Six **AWARENESS-RAISING**

UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUES AT STAKE

## 6.1 Introduction

*The achievement of the goals of the National Greening Framework relies largely on the consciousness of the issues at stake amongst the multiple stakeholders who influence the way in which South Africa's natural resources are utilised.*

In the previous chapters, the role of communications and awareness-raising were discussed in relation to water and energy saving behaviours, general recyclable waste and littering, and practising sustainable consumption.

This chapter considers the role of education and awareness, with education considered as the foundation for a conscientious society and awareness-raising to support continuous change for the advancement of sustainable development.

Education and awareness-raising have the same goal in mind, which is behaviour change and the behaviour change required is from the unsustainable to the sustainable use of natural resources combined with economic and social empowerment.

Behaviour change is achieved through a series of cognitive shifts commencing with knowing and understanding the issues at stake (*"I know why littering is harmful for the environment"*), moving to an attitude shift (*"I value the environment"*), eventually culminating in behaviour change (*"I will dispose of my litter appropriately because I value the environment"*) and lastly, sustaining the behaviour change.

Design of interventions has to factor in these four primary stages, as, if any of these are overlooked, the required behaviour change will neither be achieved nor sustained. Behaviour change is most likely to be achieved when the desired behaviour is supported through the introduction of interventions to support the required behaviour change. For example, if a municipality wishes to increase the rates of recycling of general waste, the introduction of separation at-source collection systems and buy-back centres would be essential. Interventions for a new behaviour and communications strategies are symbiotic processes.



Waste Manager shows children how to sort recycling waste. South Africa has to reduce the quantity of waste going to landfill by 25% by 2012 which means that recycling activities need to be boosted through recycling infrastructure and education.

### Sustaining the change

*The switch from incandescent light bulbs to CFLs raised a new environmental dilemma, which was the safe disposal of the CFLs due to their mercury content.*

*Awareness-raising was undertaken to ensure that households understood how to dispose of CFLs and collection, infrastructure was put in place to collect the expired CFLs.*

*To further discourage the reversion to use of incandescent light bulbs, a tax has been placed on them so as to narrow the price gap between these inefficient light bulbs and more efficient options. This example shows the importance of combining economic and information instruments in addressing particular environmental challenges and ensuring that the required infrastructure is in place to support the required behaviour change.*



## Avoiding the pitfalls of bad communications

- *Are you clear about your message?*
- *Are you clear about your target audience?*
- *Is your message appropriately packaged for your intended target audience?*
- *Is your platform for communicating your message accessible?*
- *If your message requires a behaviour change, has your target audience been supplied with the tools to effect the required behaviour change?*

*Practical guidance needs to be provided to enable the required behaviour change.*

## 6.2 Successful Communications Planning

*A communication strategy is most effective when it is designed to support a new intervention.*

Similarly, an intervention will only be successful if the communications strategy has managed to reach its intended target audience(s), which often requires differentiated messages and communications techniques. For example, if a municipality is installing a few thousand litter bins, the launch of a communications campaign before the actual implementation of the bins is vital. If a municipality plans to introduce a waste minimisation programme requiring separation at-source by households, an extensive communications campaign is required months in advance to ensure the success of the intervention.

During the 2010 FIFA World Cup™, the system of recycling bins worked best where supported by an educational aide (display boards). In future, such educational aides must also factor in the different target audiences and the differentiated messaging techniques, with the use of the vernacular language needing more attention.

Thus elements of a good communications strategy includes support of a particular intervention or a practical action required by the intended target audience. 'Save Energy' messages are only helpful, for example, where consumers are provided with practical guidance on how to save energy.

In the Western Cape, for example, the lack of knowledge about CFLs, when encouraging households to switch from incandescent light bulbs to CFLs, was overcome through a door-to-door campaign during which residents were educated about CFLs and their incandescent light bulbs were swapped for CFLs free of charge.

Communications planning needs to be treated as a component of a broader sustainable development intervention. An example is the promotion of the use of CFLs where consumers are not educated about the replacement costs or safe disposal requirements. All of these issues would need to be factored into a comprehensive

communications campaign to ensure the sustained use of CFLs as well the application of correct disposal practices.

For communications planning to be effective it needs to be integrated into the strategic planning process as it enables communicators to understand the multiple issues at play and how to weave these into one coherent communications strategy. Where treated as an add-on or after thought, the communications impact will be greatly weakened.

A good communications strategy must know its target audience, how to talk to its target audience (i.e. what messages and how to present these messages) and what are the optimal media to be used. Effective communication strategies are complicated in South Africa by regional, cultural and educational variations – this is a multi-cultural society with major disparities in levels of education, wealth, access to infrastructure and media. Since government is responsible for communicating to all strata of society, it ensures that it develops communication strategies that take all these variables into account.

Some campaigns are based on the concept of experiential learning, which is the process of making meaning from direct experience. Apart from the process of personally introducing households to CFLs and replacing their incandescent light bulbs with CFLs, another prime example of experiential learning is the Department of Energy's Basa Njengo Magogo campaign. This campaign promotes a low smoke, energy efficient technique for building indoor fires. Workshops are run in areas where wood and coal-fueled fires are used indoors and residents are shown how to build their fires so that the coal burns more efficiently.

An impact assessment of the communications materials developed for the Clean Fires Campaign, which included flyers, posters and press advertisements, found the use of English to be barrier to full understanding of the messages being communicated to the intended target audience. Furthermore, more educational activities would be required to deepen the target audience's understanding of air quality and air pollution and thus sustain the intended behaviour change.

Since sustainable development relies heavily on practical solutions to every day challenges, experiential learning is considered an important facet of all sustainability-related communications.



## Options for Action

- *Interactive and dynamic websites for literate users especially to disseminate dense information and receive comments.*
- *Toll-free call centres with well informed call operators.*
- *Enhanced use of public commuter channels for the dissemination of positive environmental messages. Audio tapes/CDs in taxis can reach a mass audience effectively.*
- *Enhanced use of regional radio stations, including community radio stations, convey environmental messages through innovative means such as radio dramas.*
- *Highly visual, creative and informative posters in all public facilities, regularly updated to maintain interest.*
- *Showing how it's done – demonstrations of the desired behaviour and involvement for deeper learning.*

## 6.3 Communication Platforms

*In respect of government communications, there are multiple platforms to communicate with a variety of stakeholders. The platforms need to be matched with the intended target audience.*

### 6.3.1 Structures

The South Africa government has set up an extensive communications networks to open up the two way channels of communication informed by the Batho Pele principles.

This includes the establishment of ward committees, which provides a system for community members to liaise with their ward councillors in a structured way; development fora in rural areas which enables rural dwellers to discuss issues with local government and sector departments; and community development workers to serve as an interface between community members and all spheres of government, ensuring that communities are aware of services available to them and facilitating access to those services.

The Department of Environmental Affairs has set up a call centre to facilitate enquiries in respect to its mandate. The Department also established Indalo Yethu, an environmental awareness agency whose sole mandate is to raise awareness around environmental issues. It does so through awareness campaigns and eco-labelling.

These are all legitimate channels for the distribution of messages on sustainable development.

### 6.3.2 Electronic media

The Department and its partners, such as Indalo Yethu, have websites

that are used to communicate effectively with literate stakeholders who converse comfortably in English and are largely urban dwellers. The Department has also used websites as an interactive tool to facilitate communications between itself and its stakeholders. These websites are designed to publish documents, to receive comments on documents and to share comments.

### 6.3.3 Distribution channels for electronic media

A recommended method for distributing audio and audio-visual information is through commuter channels, namely the national airline, buses and railways. Audio tapes played in taxis can be extremely effective in reaching the vast number of people that commute using this mode of transport. Regional radio stations are also very effective especially targeting the number of commuters using private transportation.

### 6.3.4 Distribution channels for written media

Government has at its disposal multiple channels for the distribution of its written media including schools, libraries, clinics, hospitals, rates bills, multi-purpose centres, and government buildings with customer care facilities. The list of facilities are extensive and the main requirement is to match the users of those facilities and the intended target audiences.

### 6.3.5 Opportunities for launching communications strategies

There is a wide selection of environmental days and weeks such as Arbour Week and clean up week that can be used to good effect to reinforce environmental messages or introduce new and related ideas.



National Arbour Week (Iviki Lezihlahla) serves to promote awareness for the need to plant and maintain indigenous trees throughout South Africa, especially for the many disadvantaged communities who often live in barren areas. Each year, two trees are promoted, a common and rare species.



## WESSA/WWF-SA Eco-schools Programme

The Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA) and WWF-SA co-ordinates an environmental educational programme for schools known as Eco-Schools, which was launched in South Africa in 2003. This pilot programme is endorsed by the Department of Education and funded by Pareto. The aim is for a participating school to earn green Eco-School flag, which it does through developing and applying environmental curriculum but also applying environmental and social principles to the running of the school. Participating schools are supported with educational resources and mentoring.



## 6.4 Education

*The basis for sustained change in our behaviours that affect the environment and our knowledge and skills to enhance our environmental impacts is assured through a comprehensive and sustained education cutting across all educational spheres and levels.*

Alongside technology education, environmental education is one of the fastest growing new areas of curriculum internationally. Both investment in environmental curriculum development and the development of teachers and lecturers' skills and knowledge in a range of environmental sub-disciplines are essential if we are to follow this emerging international trend.

The Department of Environmental Affairs has developed an Environmental Sector Skills Plan for South Africa. This plan identifies how environmental education is to be addressed within the different spheres of the educational system. The plan reveals a major dearth in environmental education including teachers' inability to introduce new areas of environmental learning, the lack of environmental content within the Further Education and Training (FET) Colleges' systems and that only 2.4% of learnerships in South Africa can be described as 'environmental learnerships'.

This framework supports the implementation of the Environmental Sector Skills Plan as a mechanism to engender environmental knowledge and skills across the board. Over and above this plan, schools are also perfect environments to launch environmental campaigns, especially recycling schemes, as children are receptive to new content and very willing to pass on environmental messages to their peers and elders.

## 6.5 Building a Greening Brand

*The National Greening brand is the 'face' of the Department of Environmental Affairs' of the National Greening Programme, a programme that was designed to ensure that opportunities for partnering on greening projects went beyond the 2010 FIFA World Cup™. It has been developed with the purpose of ensuring that greening projects within South Africa are supported and implemented in a coordinated and supportive environment.*



### • Brand values and purpose

As the 'face' of the National Greening Programme, the National Greening brand represents its values which are sustainability, collaboration, participation and communication. The purpose of the brand is to identify the involvement of the National Greening Programme in greening projects and programmes whereby synergies and partnerships have been utilised to coordinate the achievement of greening objectives. The aim of the brand is to promote positive greening activities and acknowledge best greening practice whilst monitoring and coordinating the attainment of aims and objectives that speak specifically to a green mandate for South Africa.

### • Brand personality

The personality of the National Greening brand, whilst retaining elements of the National DEA brand, specifically conveys an approachable, professional, knowledgeable and collaborative persona. Slightly less formal than its parent brand, it is inclusive and looks for common goals with a greening focus and the means to achieve them.

### • Brand target audience

Target audiences for the brand include stakeholders that are both internal and external to the Department. Internal stakeholders would include those within the Greening Directorate that are responsible for the ownership and implementation of the brand, as well as those throughout other Directorates of DEA.

External stakeholders should experience the National Greening brand as an approachable, knowledgeable and coordinated source on current demands within the greening environment and what opportunities for involvement are available. The National Greening brand should become synonymous with DEA and with the assurance that where the brand is experienced, best practice greening is taking place in a coordinated and effective manner. External stakeholders would typically be government departments, parastatals, sectoral organisations and the general public, with a particular focus on those most affected by environmental issues.

## 6.6 Conclusion

*Ideally, particular behaviours that support the achievement of sustainability ought to be produced through awareness alone.*

However, experience has shown that behaviour change is rapidly effected where a crisis occurs and the undesired behaviours manifest once the crisis has abated. This is certainly a lesson from South Africa's 2008 energy crisis. Therefore, awareness alone is unlikely to produce the desired behaviour change.

The purpose of awareness, from a more pragmatic point of view, is to compliment and support regulatory approaches and it is never a case of one or the other. Sustainable development can be optimised through effective communications strategies that are well planned in advance of an intervention and that are able to identify the different target audiences and align messaging and communication media and techniques accordingly.

The role of education, which has far longer time horizon, is to ensure the attitudinal shifts that require behaviour change without having to effect stringent command and control regulatory measures. One way of reaching out to the public is through the school curriculum to ensure that generations of learners have a consciousness to understand that human wellbeing is dependent on healthy ecosystems and natural resources, and that there is indeed a limit to the goods and services that they can supply.



## Appendix G Communication Strategy