Introduction to public awareness and education:
Key concepts, tools and approaches

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Adopted from Paul Mundy and Bob Huggan
Purpose and scope

- This week:
  - Expose you to the what, why and how of public awareness, education and communications
  - Learn skills of the trade of how to inform, educate, communicate with and engender support and action of the public
  - Learn from each other’s experience… good and bad

- 5-day workshop will not turn you into a professional public educator, communicator or extension practitioner

- Degrees in adult education, communication, public relations, etc. take 2-3 years
Related concepts

- Public awareness
- Public education
- Public relations (private sector)
- Public communications (Communication publique)
- Public outreach
- Public extension
Public awareness vs public education

- Public awareness = informing, sensitizing, drawing attention to,
  - Seminars, brochures
- Public education = imparting knowledge, know how
  - Workshops, training courses,
- Education is more interactive, 2-way communication
Public awareness
Means of raising public awareness

- Seminars
- Workshops/conferences
- Awareness materials (brochures, posters, videos, etc)
- Exhibitions
- Public awareness events
  - Visitors' days
  - Field days
- Media (newspapers, radio, TV)
- Websites and other internet-based tools
Seminars

- Group discussions with stakeholders on theme
  - Develop common understanding
  - Develop strategy or plan action
  - Improve interaction
  - Ensure participation in decision-making
  - Facilitate identification of problems
Conferences

- Hold conference to transmit org’s achievements to selected audience
- Deliver info
- Invite questions and discussion from audience
Exhibitions

- Present activities to mixed audience in various ways with various messages
- Allow interaction with publics
- Inform and get instant feedback
- International exhibitions
  - Introduce org to international audiences, mainly to attract funding
- National exhibitions, e.g. agricultural shows
  - Create general public awareness
  - Attract government support
  - Providing info on org and activities
  - Promote networking
- Local exhibitions
  - Promote awareness among general public
  - Potential or actual beneficiaries and partners
  - Reception foyers, libraries, museums, conference centres
Characteristics of a good display

- Comfortable; space for face-to-face interaction
  - Seats for longer discussions
- Automatic audiovisuals
  - Video, PowerPoint presentations
- Striking feature to attracts visitors
  - A stand full of people attracts more people
Visitors’ days (1)

- Gather info on audience
- Develop your message to meet their interests
- Decide how to present message
  - Wall-mounted exhibits
  - Posters
  - Demonstrations
  - Computer displays
  - Video
  - Etc
Public communications/outreach

- Process of informing people about an organisation and its activities

- Basic form:
  - Producing and distributing regular reports

- Also, efforts to:
  - Get media coverage
  - Influence policymakers’ decisions
  - Maintain good corporate reputation in eyes of stakeholders: government, donors, partners, clients, other publics…
Aim of public communications

- Project positive image of the organisation
- Improve public understanding of what the organisation does
- Enhance organisation’s relationships with outsiders
- To maintain good rapport and improve cooperation with the public
  - General understanding and cooperation
  - And for specific purposes
- Build partnerships to achieve mutual goals
Organisational image

- Project positive image of the organisation
- Image = perception of org by various publics
  - Publics in contact with org via personal interaction, media, word of mouth
- Outside perception not always accurate
  - Perception creates the image
  - Publics see image “reality”
Improving understanding

- Many publics do not understand what the org does
- Much work is technical or scientific
  - So much public awareness describes work so it is easy to understand
- Form and purpose of public awareness programme varies from one organisation to the next
Why public communications?

- Org needs government support and funding
  - Public awareness important for fund-raising and support from government, the community and other important groups

- Org obliged to inform donors, clients, partners, taxpayers and public

- Org needs feedback to focus work and stay relevant to clients’ needs

- Many orgs accused of leaving their work “on the shelf”
  - Public awareness helps outsiders hear about this work

- Inform (potential) partners of org’s work
  - Strengthens networking and potential for collaboration
Other forms of organisational communication (1)

- **Extension and training**
  - Inform and educate people about health and nutrition issues, and gain feedback about work the org should do

- **Lobbying and advocacy**
  - Convince government and parliament to change laws
  - Influence public opinion about an issue

- **Fundraising**
  - Raise money
Other forms of organisational communication (2)

- **Marketing and advertising**
  - Persuade people to buy products and services

- **Internal communication**
  - Inform staff
  - Ensure staff involvement in decisions

- **Scientific and technical communication**
  - Communicate research findings

- **Networking**
  - Exchange info and coordinate activities with partners