Introduction to public awareness and education concepts and the key elements of a biosafety communication strategy

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Presentation Outline

- Purpose and scope of the presentation
- Key concepts
- Means of raising public awareness
- Proactive planning of communications
- Basic Elements of a Communication Plan
- Messaging techniques: Developing and packaging clear and compelling messages
- Considerations in choosing communication channels
Purpose and scope

• Purpose:
  • Discuss the what, why and how of public awareness, education and communication
  • Learn skills of how to inform, educate, communicate and engender support and action
  • Learn from each other’s experience… good and bad
• 5-day workshop will not turn you into a professional public educator, communicator or extension worker
• Scope: cover basic knowledge/skills in awareness-raising and education, communications, outreach
Key concepts

- Public awareness
- Public (adult) education
- Public communication
- Public relations
- Outreach
- Extension
- Social marketing
Key concepts

- Public awareness = informing, sensitizing, drawing attention to,
  - e.g. through seminars, awareness materials (posters, flyers)
- Public education = imparting knowledge, know how
  - e.g. though workshops, educational materials
  - More interactive, 2-way communication; structured; clearly-defined learning objectives
- Outreach: Activities designed to reach-out, build relationships, inspire the public to support biosafety work
- Communication: Process of delivering messages or other information through various media
- Extension: Sustained interaction with specific audiences to transfer technical knowledge or skills
Means of awareness-raising

- Seminars
- Workshops/conferences
- Awareness materials (flyers, posters, videos, etc)
- Exhibitions
- Public awareness events
  - Visitors' days
  - Field days
- International day (IBD, WED, etc)
- Media (newspapers, radio, TV)
- Websites and other internet-based tools (e.g. webinars)
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, blogs)
- Dedicated campaigns on specific issues
Seminars and Conferences

• Discussions with stakeholders on specific themes
  – Develop common understanding
  – Develop strategy or plan action
  – Improve interaction
  – Ensure participation in decision-making
  – Facilitate identification of problems

• Hold conference to transmit org’s achievements to selected audience, deliver general info

• Invite questions and discussion from audience
Exhibitions

- Present and demonstrate the work/outputs of your organizations to mixed audience in various ways
- Allow interaction with public
- Inform and get instant feedback
- International, national and local exhibitions
- National exhibitions, e.g. at agricultural shows
  - Create general public awareness
  - Attract government and public support
  - Providing info on org and its activities
  - Promote networking
  - Identify new clients/beneficiaries and potential partners
Visitors’ / Field days

• Gather info on audience
• Develop your message to meet their interests
• Decide how to present message
  ‒ Wall-mounted exhibits
  ‒ Posters
  ‒ PowerPoint presentations
  ‒ Automatic audio-visuals/computer displays
  ‒ Practical demonstrations, field tours
• Provide comfortable environment;
  ‒ space for face-to-face interaction
  ‒ Seats for longer discussions
Social media

- Powerful/effective means of communication (esp. with youth)
- Good way to engage and maintain relationships with the public
- Use various tools to deliver targeted message: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Blogs
- Agree in your team what tools are to be used
- Note: Can be demanding, require dedication
  - Keep engaged, innovative, up-to-date;
  - Follow-up on messages/requests; Check on your contacts
  - Feed your blog posts
  - Engage prominent personalities
Proactive Communication Planning

Means planning AHEAD to:

- Provide strategic direction for communications work
- Avoid being over-run by events; ready to deal with the unexpected
- Increase efficiency of awareness-raising, communication and outreach activities
- Facilitate proper coordination within the agency
- Maintain a good control of your internal and external audiences (scientists and the public)
- Set up procedures to cope with challenges
- Forecast and mobilise the necessary resources
Proactive Communication Planning

- A communication plan serves as a **roadmap to guide the communication efforts** of an organisation.
- It is a living working document; updated periodically as circumstances and audience needs change.
- Planned communication enables an organisation to notify target audiences about its activities (services) to improve their response, acceptance or support.
- A communications plan may also be needed to guide public relations efforts in the event of crises associated with LMOs; for timely communication of information and protection of the org’s reputation.
A communication plan typically covers the 6 “W”s:

- **Who** – the target audiences
- **What** – the key messages to be articulated
- **When** – timing, it will specify the appropriate time of delivery for each message
- **Why** – the desired outcomes
- **How** – the communication vehicle (how the message will be delivered)
- **By whom** – the sender (who will deliver the information and how he/she is chosen)
Elements of a Communication Strategy

Common core elements of communication plans:

- **Situational analysis (context):** setting the scene; research/document key background information on the situation/issues being communicated about and the organization

- **Goals and objectives:** Outline what do you want to achieve;
  - major outcomes the communications plan is meant to accomplish
  - visionary, rather than specific
Elements of a Communication Strategy

- **Target Audiences**: Identify people (or entities) to whom the key messages must be communicated in order to reach the goals and objectives
  - primary and secondary audiences and their characteristics (age, level of education, societal status, beliefs, personal and professional interests, etc)
  - how you will manage their needs/expectations
- Knowing who you are trying to reach helps solidify and tailor your message
Elements of a Communication Strategy

- **Key messages**: Develop key succinct points or statements the org would like to get across to its audiences.

- **Tactics (Communication channels)**: Specify how will you implement your plan – methods to be used to communicate to the different target audiences;
  - Decide what tactics to use for each audience (email to employees, a press release, an op-ed in a local paper or a village/town meeting);
  - Spell out the details of what you will do under different situations (to-do list)
Elements of a Communication Strategy

• **Action Plan:**
  • Determine how long it will take to carry out your ideas (total amount of time, phases)
  • Assign tasks (tactics) to specific staff and give each task a deadline
  • Determine the budget – how much it will cost

• **Monitoring and evaluation:** Develop a framework to be used to assess if the set goals and objectives were reached; if you’ve been successful
  • How to collect feedback from target audiences
Messaging strategies/techniques

- The challenge of communicators is “getting inside the head of the audience” to know their information needs and how they process information.

- After analysing your audience, designing and packaging your messages accordingly.

- Standard rules:
  - Keep it simple and short (KISS)
  - Avoid clutter (unnecessary words, meaningless jargon)
The challenge of communicators is “getting inside the head of the audience” to know their information needs and how they process information.

After analysing your audience, designing and packaging your messages accordingly.

Standard rules:

- Keep it simple and short (KISS) but interesting
- Avoid clutter (unnecessary words, meaningless jargon)
- Summarise your story in three sentences: Problem, Solution, Results
Preparing effective messages

Nine Cs of an effective messaging:

- **Concise**: As few words as possible, but no fewer
- **Clear**: Your grandparents can understand it
- **Compelling**: Explains the problem
- **Credible**: Explains how you solved the problem
- **Conceptual**: Not unnecessary detail
- **Concrete**: Specific and tangible
- **Customized**: Addresses audience’s interests
- **Consistent**: Same basic message
- **Conversational**: aims to engage the audience
Preparing effective stories

• Relate the message to something the reader can understand; use analogies/metaphors

• Use human interest – link the story to issues that affect local persons, communities, environment

• Paint a picture

• Start with a specific example, then generalize

• Think of an interesting angle on your topic; Work out how to say it in an interesting way

• Be benefits-oriented (try to talk less about what you do and more about how it impacts others and how)
Preparing effective stories

- Present just one message at a time
- If you have two messages, save one for a later announcement
- State the key element of your message up front
- Avoid passives, complex grammar
- Avoid scientific or technical jargon (If you must use jargon, also explain it simple language)
- Any numbers used must be clear, understandable
- Make sure all staff will present the message the same way
Preparing effective stories

- Avoid clutter: cut every word that adds no value; e.g. To my personal advantage = To my advantage
- Turn long sentences into short ones: “At the present time we are experiencing some precipitation” = "Currently it’s raining"
- Turn passive sentences into active sentences e.g. The trees were being fallen from by leaves
- Keep acronyms, slang and other hard to understand terminology out of your main messages
- The elevator pitch: Imagine you are in a lift with your Prime Minister. What would you tell him about your biosafety work or project? What is the most important thing to say? You have 2 minutes
Preparing effective stories

- Keep sentences short – 17 words or less
- Keep paragraphs short - One main idea per paragraph
- Link paragraphs together with proper transitions;
- Put the paragraphs in a logical order (Use boldface run-in heads to focus each paragraph; delete them later)
- Use diagrams or photos (a photo is worth 1000 words)
Messaging: In summary

- **Be clear** (be simple but informative and persuasive, never confusing)
- **Be consistent** (Pay close attention to details like colour scheme, imagery, writing tone, paper stock and interactive functionality)
- **Be compelling** (Every element is crafted to get the end result you want)
- **Use of graphics** (Graphics can tell a story, create mood and feelings for a product while getting and retaining attention. Design includes layout, photographs, illustrations, paper, colour, ink and type styles.)
Choosing communication channels

- Be creative in the way you choose comm. channels.
- Consider channels that have a multiplier effect like websites and newsletters.
- Think of channels where your audience will find the information that you are producing.
- Think outside your own box, beyond scientific channels such as peer-reviewed scientific journals.
- Some channels, e.g. internet may not be an appropriate channel for reaching rural practitioners.
- Local radio stations, newspapers or video documentaries might be an option.
Ask the following questions

– What are the defining features of your target audience (common information needs or activity habits)?
– Which communication channels reach your target audience?
– Which channels do they prefer, and which one do they access?
– Does your target group have any culturally unique communication channels?
The science behind LMOs is highly technical; it is not necessary for members of the public to have in-depth knowledge about the science to form opinions on the social and ethical implications. ” (Hails and Kinderlerer, 2003)

By allowing the public to know how, in a proactive manner, about biosafety and regulatory measures in place, you will be able to generate public confidence and support
Conclusion

• Consistent, disciplined execution of the comm. plan is essential to deliver on the set goals

• It is important to deliver consistent messages and content across a range of communication channels

• All communications need to be aligned with the organization’s overall communication objectives

• Communications need to be properly tome for maximum relevance and impact
For Further Information Contact:

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