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Module 7: Communications

Section 1: Communicating Climate Change, Coral Bleaching, and Resilience

Learning Objectives

By the end of this module you will have:

- An understanding of why we need to communicate about the impacts of climate change to coral reef ecosystems.
- Identify different audience and think about how to tailor communication strategies to target each audience.
- Heard about innovative ways others are communicating to the public and stakeholders.

Background

Effective Management can mean so many different things. When you break it down to the bare issues, you discover that it is all about **People** and how they relate to their **Environment**. Instead of focusing on one particular approach to managing reefs effectively, this section focuses on the fundamental component to any effective management strategy: **COMMUNICATION**. Paying attention to how you communicate information and to whom is the first step to becoming more effective. Add to that some creative spark, and you might be on to something that advances your efforts substantially.

In this section, we want you to ‘think outside the box’ and work together to come up with a communication strategy that you can take home with you. We will tie together several of the previous sections to discuss the importance of communicating about mass bleaching and management strategies to various audiences. It is crucial to communicate the ecological and socioeconomic impacts of coral bleaching in order to raise awareness, impact decision makers, change behavior, and raise funds for future research. It is also important to realize that managing for resilience does not always look like traditional management, so communicating this will be very important. This brief module examines how to identify various audiences and how to tailor messages to each audience for maximum impact.

Mass coral bleaching is an issue that attracts strong interest from the public, the media, and policy/decision-makers and it is an issue we can take advantage of to communicate about the causes and impacts of climate change, resilience, management strategies, etc. In response, managers will want to provide up-to-date and informative answers to important questions about mass bleaching events and related impacts.

- A communication strategy for responding to mass bleaching might have three aims:
- (1) Gain support from supervisors and constituencies to respond to mass bleaching in the short and long term
 - (2) Engage stakeholders in a two-way communication about the extent and severity of bleaching and actions that can be taken to build reef resilience
 - (3) To work with the media to raise awareness of mass bleaching events and their impacts among the general public.

In working with any audience, managers are advised to take an approach that is clear and well thought out, proactive, solution-oriented, balanced, and respectful of political constraints. In communicating about mass bleaching, it is important that managers maintain the trust of their supervisors and the credibility of their reputation. Managers should be aware of political and social sensitivities and operate within organizational constraints. Managers also need to resist temptations to over-dramatize issues or events in order to meet the expectations of the press. This is of particular importance when bleaching is patchy and tourism operators are wary of the condition of their frequently visited sites becoming highlighted in the media. Lost credibility due to exaggeration of facts or presentation of premature conclusions can be costly and, sometimes, impossible to regain.



Worksheet or Activity

Worksheet: Communications in your Bleaching Response Plan.

Worksheet: Resilience Communication

Activity: Communications Campaign

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

The following provides a briefing schedule to senior management, the governor or other elected official, the press and the message to be conveyed according to the risk or severity of bleaching. Fill in dates and triggers that are appropriate to your site. Think about the message that should be conveyed in each of these cases. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority table of activities is provided on the back of this sheet as an example.

Approx. date (adjust per your site)	Trigger ₁	Briefings				Examples of messages (tailor to your own site):
		Senior Management	Elected official	Stakeholders and partners	The media	
1 June						Summer approaching; bleaching risk period; we are prepared
	High bleaching risk					Temperatures unusually high; coral bleaching event probable
	Moderate bleaching					High temperatures recorded; moderate bleaching observed; areas worst affected
	Severe bleaching					Very high temperatures recorded; severe bleaching observed; areas worst affected; mortality likely
15 July						Temperature trends for first half of summer; summary of reports of coral bleaching
15 September	No bleaching					Summer concluding; bleaching risk period over; no significant bleaching observed
	Moderate or severe bleaching					High water temperatures recorded during summer; bleaching observed; preliminary assessment of extent and severity; detailed surveys underway
15 October	Moderate or severe bleaching					Summary of full extent and severity of bleaching; implications for the reef
Monthly						Updates on temperature trends and coral condition; also publish to web and email to all staff

EXAMPLE: GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE PARK AUTHORITY COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Approx. date	Trigger ¹	Briefings			Message
		Senior Management	Minister	Stakeholders	
1 Dec		^	^	^	Summer approaching; bleaching risk period; GBRMPA prepared
20 Dec		^			Temperature trends for December; plans for Christmas break
	High bleaching risk	^	^		Temperatures unusually high; coral bleaching event probable
	Moderate bleaching	^	^	^	High temperatures recorded; moderate bleaching observed; areas worst affected
	Severe bleaching ²	^	^	^	Very high temperatures recorded; severe bleaching observed; areas worst affected; mortality likely
15 Feb ³		^			Temperature trends for first half of summer; summary of reports of coral bleaching
31 March	No bleaching	^	^	^	Summer concluding; bleaching risk period over; no significant bleaching observed
	Moderate or severe bleaching	^	^	^	High water temperatures recorded during summer; bleaching observed; preliminary assessment of extent and severity; detailed surveys underway
31 April	Moderate or severe bleaching	^	^	^	Summary of full extent and severity of bleaching; implications for Great Barrier Reef
Monthly ⁴		^			Updates on temperature trends and coral condition; also publish to web and email to all staff

Resilience Communication Worksheet

Instructions: In this exercise, you are going to begin to develop a communication plan that is specific to Resilience that will assist you in your management strategies. Your main message or theme can be delivered in a variety of ways including advertising campaigns, school programs, radio show, a video – the possibilities are endless. The most important thing is to make sure it is focused and outcome oriented. Follow the steps in the Resilience Communication Worksheet to complete this exercise.

OUTPUT: Communication campaign plan outlined

Try This At Home: To have a well developed effective communication campaign, it requires a dedicated staff person to make sure it is implemented. Working with community volunteers and available resources can produce a great product that gets attention.

Step 1. What is your goal for your communication strategy? (see examples below)

GOAL: _____

Examples of types of goals:

- To raise awareness
- To increase cooperation or compliance
- To gain political support
- To get young people involved
- To change behaviors of resource users

Step 2. Identify Resilience issue of concern (see helpful questions below)

Resilience Issue of Concern: _____

??Helpful Questions??

1. What aspect of the resilience principles would resonate most with your target audience?
2. Does your issue of concern have a practical application?

- Does it have an emotional element that people would respond to?

Step 3. Identify your target audience and secondary audiences for your communication plan* (See helpful questions below)

**Note that the audience refers to the group you are trying to influence. You will be able to identify groups that can HELP you with this later in the exercise.*

??Helpful Questions??

- Who is your primary audience?
- What other audiences might be interested or relate to this message?
- Which audiences have the most political influence?
- Which audiences have the most social influence?
- Who will be most positively affected by any management actions?
- Who has the potential to be negatively affected by any management actions?
- Who will be involved in the implementation of management actions?
- Who usually causes confusion or trouble when information is distributed to the public or your key audience?

Please fill out this table

Primary Audience	Description	Rationale

Please fill out this table

Secondary Audience	Description	Rationale

Step 4. Identify and rank most effective methods of communication or message delivery (see helpful questions below)

??Helpful Questions??

1. How do people usually get information where you live? (TV, radio, newspaper, friends, religious gatherings, local shop, village meetings, etc.)
2. Which medium seems to be most powerful or influential?
3. Do people respond to visual images?
4. Are people interested in local politics and decisions?
5. Do people read the news regularly?

For Ranking:

6. What is the least expensive way to communicate with people?
7. Do you have existing resources or education programs that you could build on?
8. Are there specific education or outreach campaigns/programs that you can expand?
9. Are there resources in your community to help you implement your plan/strategy?

Please fill out this table

Method of Communication	Feasibility Ranking (1-5) 5 = most feasible	Notes

Step 4. Identify who should have primary responsibility for implementation

Person/Agency Responsible: _____

Step 5. Identify individuals, organized groups, or institutions that can help or support implementation

Helper	Description of Potential Contribution

Step 6. Identify resources available to you currently (see helpful questions below)

Staff	Schools	Events	Other
e.g. Public Relations Specialist	e.g. Ocean studies course	e.g. National Holiday Celebration	

??Helpful Questions??

1. Are there existing outreach or communication programs in your area or for your site?
2. Are there school programs that have environment or ocean classroom modules in place?

3. Are there particular teachers in your community with an interest in developing such programs?
4. Do you have TV or radio shows that highlight or discuss local issues?
5. Are there annual events that most of the community participates in? (e.g., agriculture exhibits, weekly markets, social events, religious events)

Step 7. Identify additional needs for you or your organization to successfully implement this plan/strategy

Potential Needs	Yes/No	Notes
Funding		
Expertise		
Materials		
Other		

Step 8. Layout a preliminary timeline for activity or program implementation

Timeframe (by quarter)	Activity Description	Milestones	Outcomes
Example: 1st Quarter	Conduct community survey on current perceptions about status of reefs	1. Develop survey; 2. Implement survey; 3. Analyze survey	Report on current perceptions to be used to shape message or info distributed



Activity – Not Using this Activity in Guam

Application Exercise: Communication Campaign

Goal: To develop a communication campaign that is appropriate for your problem and place

Guidelines: In this exercise, you are going to begin to develop a communication campaign that is specific to the issues of resilience, climate change, or bleaching that will assist you in your management strategies. Your main message or theme can be delivered in a variety of ways including advertising campaigns, school programs, a radio show, a puppet show, a video, a song for radio – the possibilities are endless. The most important thing is to make sure it is focused and outcome oriented.

Group Exercise

Instructions:

1. Identify issue or message
2. Identify communication goal
3. Identify key/target audiences
4. Identify best method of delivery (skit! song & dance!)
5. Identify concerns/emotions of stakeholders
6. Develop campaign that is audience appropriate
7. Pitch it to us

Output: Communication campaign framework developed

Try This At Home: To have a well developed effective communication campaign, it requires a dedicated staff person to make sure it is implemented. Working with community volunteers and available resources can produce a great product that gets positive attention.



On-the-Web

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Education Unit: <http://www.reefed.edu.au/>

The Nature Conservancy Reef Resiliency Toolkit: www.reefresilience.org

The Reef Environmental Education Foundation: <http://www.reef.org/>

Coral Reef Alliance-International Coral Reef Information Network Library
www.coralreefalliance.org

ReefBase: www.reefbase.org

NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program – Outreach and Education Program
<http://www.coralreef.noaa.gov/outreach/welcome.html>

Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Website:
<http://www.fknms.nos.noaa.gov/edu/welcome.html>