



## Asia Leadership Program

on Sustainable Development  
and Climate Change



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### Project Communication for Development Results\*

Charlotte Lapsansky, Development Communication Specialist, Asian Development Bank

#### SUMMARY

Project communication contributes to achieving targets for social development and can mitigate risks arising from lack of stakeholder buy-in, says Charlotte Lapsansky, ADB's Development Communication Specialist.

#### CONTEXT

During the 2016 Asia Leadership Program in Seoul on 23-27 May 2016, effective communication among different stakeholders on climate change, environmental impact and mitigation issues was highlighted as one of the biggest leadership challenges in the successful execution of projects. The fourth Knowledge Sharing Series (KSS4) was organized to discuss this issue, with Lapsansky as one of the web conference's speakers.

#### KEY POINTS

Several cases illustrate the impact of communications in achieving social development.

- Because of communication strategies, a road project in Cambodia resulted in the employment of 32% of unskilled women and a change in the contractor's views of women as competent and valuable crewmembers.
- A project in the People's Republic of China that promotes the use of energy efficient appliances through proper labelling has resulted in consumers' seriousness in considering the labels when buying appliances.
- Meanwhile, a river basin management project in Nepal experienced a three-year delay and cancellation of integral components worth \$18 million due to the lack of communication initiatives during project conception and before project implementation especially as the project involved diverse communities with divergent interests.

Project communications comprise several requirements, and a communications strategy is just one of them. ADB's Public Communications Policy aims to address such problems by requiring a project communications strategy detailing at minimum the (i) type of information to be made public, (ii) mechanisms for public notice, and (iii) persons/units responsible for implementing the strategy.

Project communications is critical in every project cycle stage in ADB.

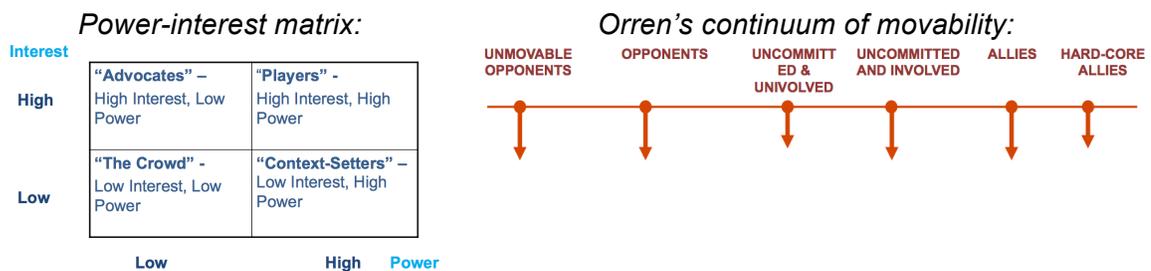
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\* Presentation during the 4th Knowledge Sharing Webinar Series on 21 June 2016 with the theme "Leadership and Communication Challenges for Climate Change Aspects of Development Projects."

- In the *concept and design stage*, communication assessments (stakeholders, messages, channels) are used to make strategic decisions and do outreach activities.
- In the *approval stage*, ADB requires a strategy to be included in loan documents in lining up resources and structures for delivery.
- In the *implementation stage*, project teams monitor the delivery of strategy, while ADB missions may review progress.

The following are some elements included in the communication strategy:

- Audiences*. Some tools in mapping stakeholders include the power-interest matrix and the continuum of movability (Orren 2001).



- Current and desired behavior*. The stakeholders’ desired behavior can be captured in one sentence: “We want (stakeholder) to (do something).” This can then be compared with their current behavior (i.e., unaware; aware, concerned, knowledgeable; motivated to change; tries new behavior; or sustains new behavior).
- Messages*. Pick the appropriate type of message and information sharing needs (i.e., “informative messages” to fill information gaps, “persuasive messages” to motivate and shift attitudes and behaviors, and “listening” to convey you are hearing their opinions).
- Channels*. Do not just throw information into the void. Know what kinds of channels stakeholders, including minority groups, regularly access and trust.

## CONCLUSION

Lapsansky summarized her discussion with the following takeaways:

- Communication is an upfront investment in project effectiveness;
- Communication should support dialogue and participation;
- Start communication early in the project cycle;
- Engage with communication professionals to plan, design and implement strategies; and
- Determine the impact of the channel used on behavior.

## REFERENCE

Asian Development Bank (ADB). 2013. *Public Communications Policy (PCP) Handbook*. <http://www.adb.org/site/disclosure/public-communications-policy/pcp-handbook>.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Charlotte Lapsansky is a Development Communication Specialist at the ADB's Department of External Relations. She provides technical guidance to project teams on behavior change communication and development communication for ADB-financed projects. She has a PhD in Communication from the University of Southern California and has worked with several nongovernment organizations and research projects on human rights and development.

## **KEYWORDS**

ADB Public Communications Policy; Behavior-change communication; Development communication; Project communication; Stakeholder engagement.