

Highlights of the discussion

Communicating Environmental Protection

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This brown bag is part of a knowledge-sharing series that the DER Project Communication group regularly conducts for operations staff. Project leaders share practical lessons on how communication strategies can be designed to engage stakeholders, change behaviors, and mitigate risks to achieve effective project outcomes.

Case for discussion:

INDONESIA: [Coral Reef Rehabilitation and Management Project \(COREMAP\)](#) – focusing on Phase II

Speakers:

- Nasimul Islam, Environment Specialist, SEER; Project Officer, COREMAP II
- Jamaluddin Jompa, Professor, Marine Program at Universitas Hasanuddin; Secretary, COREMAP II
- Eko Rudianto, Director, Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries; Project Manager COREMAP II
- Guillermo Morales, Team Leader, Project Management Consultants, COREMAP II

Communication context:

COREMAP is a three-phased project with the objective of setting up 20 million hectares of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) by 2020:

- Phase 1 (1998-2003) established a framework for a national coral reef system
- Phase 2 (2004-2011) established 13.9 hectares as MPAs – which required a holistic approach to balance environmental management with socio-economic development
- Phase 3 (2014-2018) is directed toward program institutionalization through infrastructure development, community participation and integration of the program into national, regional, and community systems and processes
- Based on Phase 1 lessons, communication was integrated as a component for Phase 2 and considered critical for success due to the project's complex communication context:
 - Multiple stakeholders are involved in coastal and marine resources management often with opposing interests
 - For the project to succeed in MPA delineation, coral reef monitoring and protection and decentralization of project management, these stakeholders had to be effectively engaged and coordinated
 - Destructive fishing practices, unrestricted coral harvesting, poor solid waste disposal, uncontrolled tourism and other behavior had to be shifted toward coastal and marine sustainability
 - Stakeholders from national, district to local levels needed a paradigm shift toward decentralized management particularly a stronger community-based resource administration – this required extensive social mobilization and advocacy efforts

Key communication approaches:

National level

1. Communication at this level was focused on:
 - a) members of parliament to enable the passage of national and regional policies on coastal and marine resource management
 - b) key law enforcers to ensure that regulations are enacted to protect coral reefs from destructive behavior
 - c) key judicial officials to strengthen the demarcation of marine protected areas and assert their legality
2. The communication strategy was developed early as a project requirement as public awareness raising was integrated as a component of the project
 - the action plan with administration details, however, was only developed in the project's second year and no dedicated communication personnel were assigned to take on the implementation
3. Key communication strategies:

Promoting, building and sharing the COREMAP brand

- The project trained key EA representatives to have a clear and common understanding of COREMAP II, and face and engage media with consistent messaging and branding
 - EA spokespersons were visible throughout the project timeframe, more champions from other sectors would have promoted specific campaign

- messages to address stakeholder interests (i.e., Champions from the tourism industry would have articulated coral reef management in the language befitting the interests of tour operators, resort owners, etc.)
- A TV and radio campaign popularized the need for a multi-stakeholder approach to effectively manage coastal resources and maintain national interest
 - The project invested on setting up partnerships, joint productions and sponsorships from the private sector and media organizations to address the high costs of TV and radio production and airtime but these proved difficult to maintain in the medium term
 - Mileage was achieved but since media is not the most efficient channel to reach community audiences, the project employed varied media mixes for its multi-stakeholders
 - A web-based open access repository (www.coremap.or.id) was created to provide up-to-date information about the condition of Indonesia's coral reefs and project monitoring data
 - The website allowed easy access to technical information and evidence for journalists, advocates, students, policy makers and NGOs, and also helped coordinate donor activities, but the remoteness of some project sites dissuaded community audiences from using web-based channels
 - Various communication paraphernalia (i.e., bulletins, album tracks on CDs, books, brochures, etc.) for different audiences were produced to keep the information flow on the benefits of effective coral management, and for stakeholders in the tourism industry, potentials for eco-tourism
 - Merchandising paraphernalia (e.g., pins, bookmarks, mugs, pens, notebooks, etc.) complemented the regular communication materials to further promote the COREMAP brand

Mobilizing public support for effective coral reef management and positioning the issue as a public concern

- Various venues, platforms and social events were created to engage stakeholder groups and customize messages for their needs and stake
 - *Duta Karang* (Coral Ambassador) and *Cerdas Cermat* (national competition) were effective for audiences in town centers
 - Technical assistance for events, workshops and conferences provided by the project provided evidence-based data translating technical information into digestible pieces for various audiences
- Advocacy efforts led to the integration of coral reef management principles in the curriculum of local schools
 - Teachers were trained on the curriculum and to provide ready content, 12 level books from elementary to high school were developed and used
 - The national education department eventually adapted the books – succeeding program phases would have to sustain interest to integrate the curriculum on a national level and for teachers to continuously use the books
- Volunteer groups – “Friends of COREMAP” and “COREMAP Tentacles” were organized to help in lobbying with policy makers and in stakeholder advocacy

Using public figures to motivate people for individual action

- The project lobbied ministers of parliament, officers in law enforcement and judiciary to pass a national framework and enact policies on coastal and marine resource management
 - Lobbying efforts proved to work when key individuals were actually brought to project sites where they realized the actual benefits of coral reef management and appreciated their value
 - With the project phases spanning 20 years, and the temporal nature of government positions -- three presidents in three project phases -- future projects may need to look into sustainability

Community level

1. The unique element in the design of COREMAP II was its decentralized model focusing on community-based resource management. This required a substantial investment in social mobilization to organize community groups and foster behavior change through communication to encourage shifts from destructive behavior to resource management
2. Local NGOs were hired to organize *pokmas* or community groups to develop village-level capacity to manage coastal resources and implement communication activities. Regional advisers were deployed to work with the NGOs and extension workers to:
 - Conduct face-to-face meetings with villagers to wean them away from destructive fishing and coral gathering practices, and exercise proper waste disposal. Trained members of the *pokmas* and deputized civilians reinforce the behavior change by investigating destructive activities and enforcing laws. Alternative income projects through a community contract system also helped promote the behavior changes from destruction to better management.
 - Based on a survey conducted by the project in 2009, there was a significant reduction in destructive fishing practices: 57% decrease in use of explosives; 51% decrease in use of poison; 39% decrease in coral harvesting
 - The survey also showed that villagers in project sites understood the use and value of coral reefs: 64% referred to them as the breeding area of fish; 48% said they were spawning areas for fish. Only 12% said that coral reefs can be used as construction materials and 3% as aquarium ornaments
 - 97% of villagers agreed that there is a need to manage coral reefs and 94% said their awareness on the need to manage them was due to their exposure to communication activities during COREMAP II
 - Face-to-face meetings were considered effective as 71% of villagers said that NGOs, extension workers and resident advisors were their main source of knowledge about the project and coastal resources management; 43% said friends, neighbors and family members were primary sources while 14% got their information from village officials
 - Interestingly, 55% of villagers from outside the project sites said that their main information sources are friends, neighbors and family members followed by NGOs, extension workers and resident advisors (34%) and village officials (17%), showing the value of information dissemination through social connections
 - Build and operate 56 information centers in village sites in all eight project districts. The centers not only provided communication on coastal resource management but also served diverse purposes: as a social venue where fisherfolk converged at the

end of the day to drink tea and exchange updates; also used as towers to watch illegal fishing activities; and as symbols of communities' stake in coral ecosystem management, as they themselves helped build them

- Survey results (2009) among community groups showed that 45% visited the information centers 1 to 3 times a month; 12% four to six times a month; 1% seven to nine times a month and 7% more than nine times a month
- Based on the survey, more communication materials in the information centers would have helped to further build awareness and knowledge about coral ecosystems.

Communication lessons:

1. It pays to integrate communication as early in project design as possible and phase the activities throughout project implementation. Implementing communication strategies requires detailed action planning including budgeting and monitoring.
2. Project managers need to designate dedicated personnel in the PMUs/PIUs to oversee the administration of communication plans. Recruiting professional communication experts is a cost-effective management practice to ensure sound communication planning and implementation. At the local level, projects may need to invest in capacitating NGOs and community groups to implement communication plans.
3. For multi-stakeholder projects covering different national, district and local levels, project managers need to rationalize the communication approaches that will fit stakeholder needs, interests and access. Media, social media and the conduct of national social events (i.e., competitions, coral ambassadors, etc.) are often treated as default communication channels, and may not be as effective as face-to-face meetings in the villages, particularly those in remote locations without access to mainstream media and communication technologies.
4. Behavior change communication approaches work better if complemented with other project interventions to reinforce and sustain behavior shifts. Supporting alternative livelihood, policies and institutions, community infrastructures and law enforcement, all of which, if implemented in tandem, can strengthen project communication activities.
5. Neighbors, family members and friends play a critical role in promoting and supporting behavior changes, and providing information to other people in the community.