

Communications Planning Session (Facilitator's Notes)

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Why Communication? Why This Session? (1 hour)

Exercise (15 mins):

In plenary, ask the question: What is communication to you? List the answers on the board.

Input + Question and Answer (45 mins)

Communication, the transfer of information and knowledge from a person / organisation / community to another, is at the very heart of our work. It happens in all aspects of our work (from internal to the public) and for various reasons (from the operational to awareness-raising of women's rights issues). Very often (at least in my experience), communications is taken for granted within organisations. Taken for granted in the sense that organisations look to the 'usual' modes of communication for their work without thinking of the changing terrain of communications: new media, the changing behaviour of audiences, new ways of crafting our messages, advancing ideas within feminist theories, changing ways of analysing women's rights issues.

There is a need for organisations to start thinking about communications strategically. That is, looking at communications from a decision-making perspective and assessing how we have communicated in the past and how we can develop communication approaches that respond to our goals and our communities' (audience, if you will) contexts and realities.

This session is aimed towards starting that conversation for SAMBHRI. To look at communication needs and issues and to try to come up with strategies to integrate communications planning in our work.

Communication for Movement Building

Communications are at the heart of movement building. No communications = no movements. Movements are built through communication and are sustained with communications. I believe that one of the criteria for 'successful', sustained and active movements is their capacity to strategically communicate what they are all about and to communicate with one another.

Movements are about change. If we cannot articulate the change that we are aiming for appropriately and effectively, then our movement will fail.

What does effective communication mean for movement building?

- Varied communication channels that address a broad range of audiences.
- Articulations of issues and proposed solutions that resonate with different audiences.
- Maximisation of various media channels.

In the corporate sector, effective communication translates into 'word of mouth' and further into profit. Though I personally do not like using corporate metaphors for the activist contexts, in this case, I believe that effective communications does translate into 'word of mouth' which further translates into meeting our goals (should it be a change in policy, or change in perception, or increased membership / support).

Types of Communication

Internal Communications

- **Operational Communications:** The ways and means in which the organisation / network / project shares information regularly to manage the organisation and implement projects and activities.
- **Knowledge Management.** Activities, processes and platforms that facilitate the sharing and distribution of knowledge within the organisation / network. It's main goal is to foster 'institutional' knowledge for the long-term sustainability of the organisation / network.

External Communications

- **Communications to Build and Sustain Partnerships.** Activities, processes and products to bring in new partners / members into the organisation / network as well as regular communications to keep them involved.
- **Campaigns and Awareness-raising.** These are time-bound communication activities that are linked to specific goals. These are 'action-based' communications -- they have very specific goals, messages and audiences.
- **Communications to Build and Maintain Your Reputation.** Processes, products and activities that contribute to the overall 'image' of the organisation / network.

Communication Needs and Issues Session (1 hour)

Exercise (30 mins)

Small group activity:

6 people / group to discuss the following questions:

1. How has your organisations communicated in the past? What activities have you done? What tools have you used?
2. What are the challenges that you have faced in communications?
3. If you could make your communications more effective, what would you do?

Each group will agree on a maximum of 3 answers per questions. They will write their answers on flip chart paper. They will post their answers on the

wall.

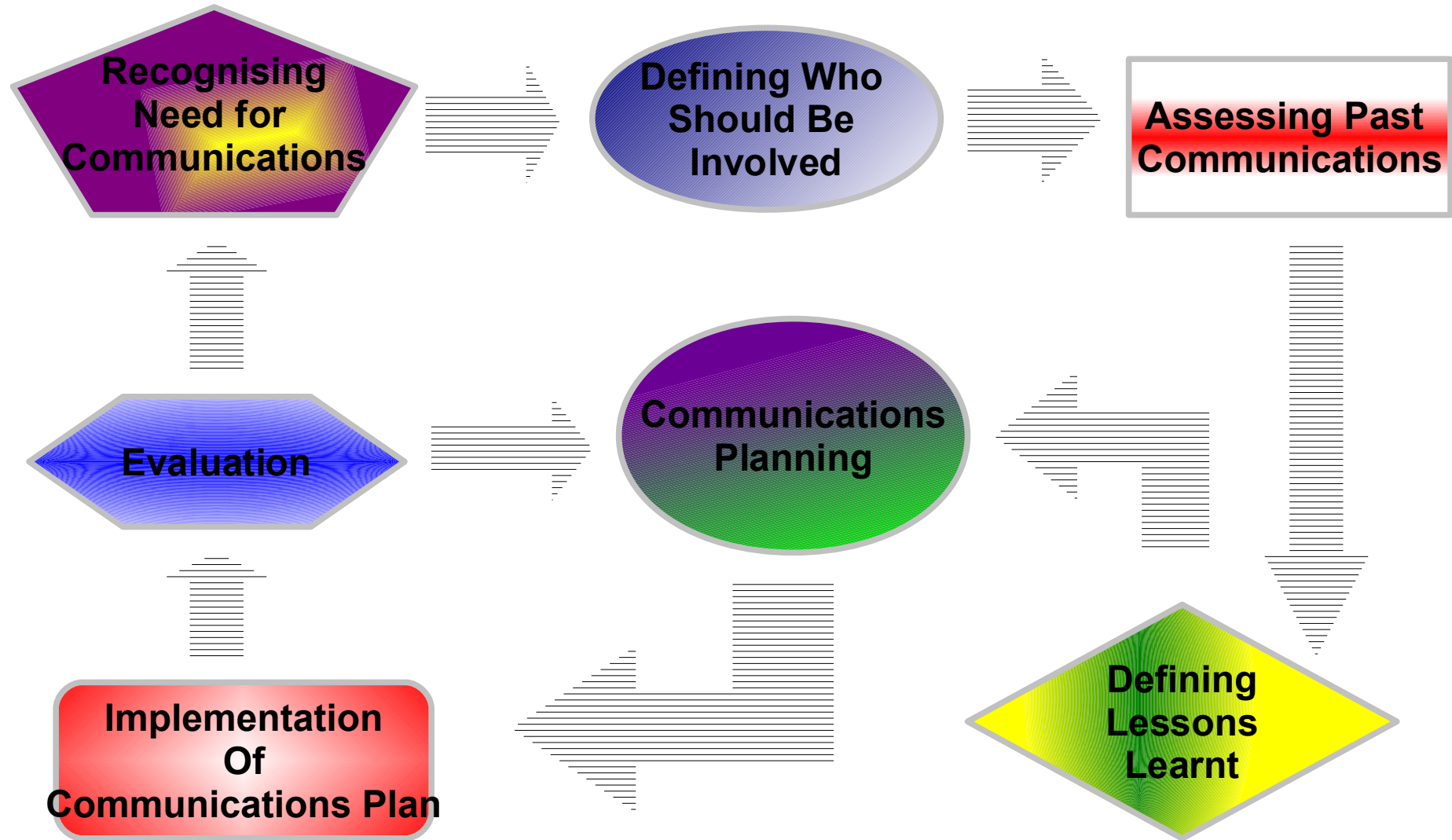
Gallery and syntehsis (30 mins)

Strategic Communication Planning (1.5 hours)

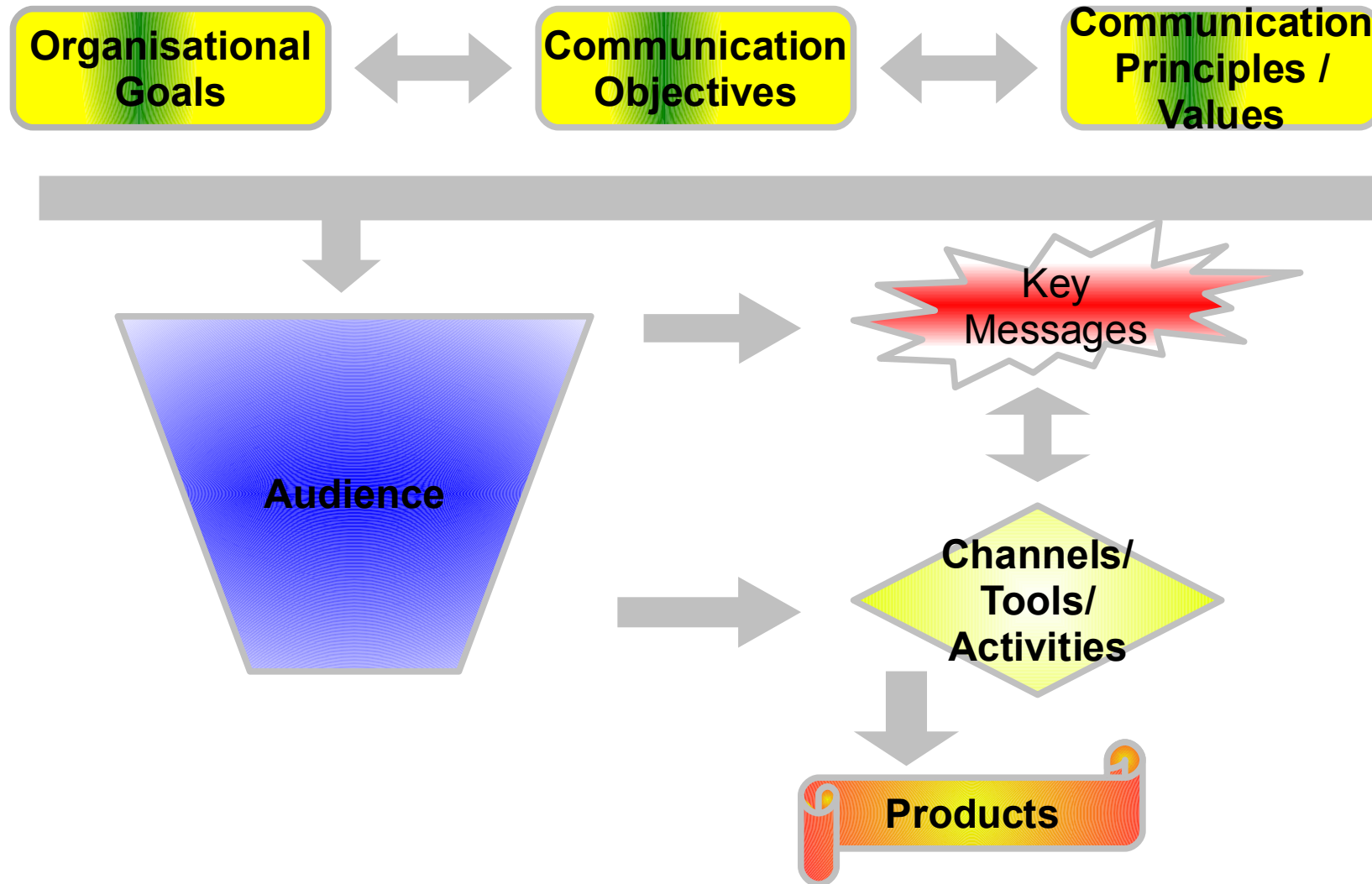
Input (1 hour)

Strategic communications planning is NOT about tools. It is about making the tools and channels meet our goals. It's about clarifying our goals and really defining (getting to know) our audience. It's about being clear about why we are communicating. It's about maintaining an evaluative approach to communications. It is not a one-time activity, rather an on-going process of planning, implementing, analysing and evaluation.

Life Cycle of Strategic Communications



Elements of a Communication Plan



Communications Planning Template

Goals of the Organisation / Network

It is important to base communications on the overall goals of the organisation / network.

- What is the main objective of your organisation / network / project?
- What is your vision of the future? How will you achieve that vision?

Communication Objectives

Define the goals of your communication processes and activities. Note that different projects / initiatives and campaigns have different communication objectives. It is also important to be specific about your communication objectives. Another consideration is ensuring that your communication objectives are measurable and that, at the end of implementation, you will be able to assess if you have achieved them.

- Why are you launching communication efforts, in the first place? What do you aim to achieve?
- How will your communication efforts support your organisation / network / project objectives?

Communication Principles / Values

Define how you will approach your communication efforts, processes and activities. This should be linked to both the organisational goals and your communication objectives. For feminist organisation, it would be key to base your values in feminist values and theory.

- What are the overall values of your organisation and how do they apply to your communication values?
- How will you approach your communication efforts and processes?

Audience	Key Messages	Channels / Tools / Activities	Products
<p>List and describe and communities you want to reach with your communication efforts. It is important to be specific in identifying them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are your stakeholders, partners, beneficiaries, targets? Who among them will you reach through your communication efforts? • • What are their communication contexts? 	<p>Identify key messages (up to 3) for each audience. The messages must be distinct, and can be organised as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the problem? • What solution are you proposing? • What action do you want each audience to take? <p>The messages must be 'simple' (not cutting and pasting of project or research documents, please) and must be relevant to the intended audience.</p>	<p>Identify what tools / channels and activities you will use for each message and audience. Revisit the tools and channels you have used in the past as a starting point. Ensure that the tools are relevant to your intended audience. In thinking about this, it is also important to go beyond tools / channels and explore other opportunities to communicate your message.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What tools / channels are available to you? • What activities can be organised to communicate your messages? What activities are about to happen that can be an opportunity to communicate your message? • Are the tools / channels on your list relevant to your intended audience? • What tools / channels / activities are you using for each key message? 	<p>List the 'products' that you will need to develop for each audience, key message and channel / tool. Revisit the communication products that you already have and assess if they are relevant to this communication plan.</p>

Selection of Tools (1.5 Hours)

Exercise 1: Tools Currently Being Used

In plenary, ask the participants to write down on coloured paper the tools and channels they are currently using. Group them together on the wall. (15 mins)

Look at commonalities and differences and ask the following questions: (30 mins)

1. How did you decide on using these tools?
2. Who developed these tools for you?
3. Are you considering to use other tools?
4. Point out what's missing and ask why.

Input + Q&A: Assessing and Selecting Different Communication Tools (45 mins)

Assessing and selecting tools is a balancing act between the following factors:

- Organisational capacity and resources
- Audience context
- Capacity of the tools / channels to meet communication goals

This process has two levels. The first level is selecting based on the communication goals and audience. The second level is selection of specific tools and channels, such as what web services to use, which newspaper to partner with, or which software to use.

What Tools / Channels / Activities are Out There?

Online tools: blogs, social networking sites, forums, chatrooms, websites, databases

Offline tools: posters, brochures, stickers, pins, badges, buttons, t-shirts

Activities: meetings, conferences, flash mobs, protests, rallies

Criteria for Selecting Communication Tools

The questions that we need to ask ourselves when we are assessing and selecting communication tools are:

What tools / channels are we currently using? Are these tools effective?

What capacities and resources do we have as an organisation to support and maintain these tools? What capacities and resources do we need to develop?

Are the tools relevant to our audience/s?

Matching the Audience to the Message and Tools / Channels (2 hours)

Exercise: Communication Scenarios (1 hour)

The Situation and the Context

The End Violence Against Women in South Asia Network (EVAWSAN) is a regional network that aims to:

- change violence against women policy in South Asian countries by engaging with local policy-makers
- raise awareness on the VAW issues within South Asia
- aid victims of violence in South Asia

EVAWSAN is a membership-based organisation that has over 150 members in South Asia who volunteer to support EVAWSAN's goals and activities. The members consist of lawyers, doctors, journalists, social workers and activists against violence against women.

EVAWSAN has offices in India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Each national office provides direct services to victims and survivors of violence through help-lines and protection homes in districts across South Asia. EVAWSAN also provides legal support to victims and survivors of violence.

Early this year, EVAWSAN -- India rescued young girls who were victims of trafficking in India. Devi, a sixteen year old girl, grew up in rural Bangladesh with her parents. Two years ago, she was offered a job to work as a domestic helper in India. Her family believed that the offer was legitimate and agreed for her to go to India. When she arrived in India, her passport was taken away and she was forced to work as a sex slave, servicing foreigners and expatriates in India. In those two years, she was kept under control with drugs and was not compensated for her 'work'. She found out about the EVAWSAN help-line through a poster near her brothel and was able to call (using a stolen mobile phone from one of her clients) for rescue. Through collaborating with the police and local government, EVAWSAN was able to launch a rescue mission to the brother where Devi and other young women from South Asia were being kept. The rescue effort was successful. However, the police and the local government leaked information about it to the media. As a result, Devi and the other girls' identities were made public as was this case of trafficking. On positive note, the media is beginning to raise awareness on the issue of trafficking and EVAWSAN has garnered positive publicity for their work on rescuing the girls.

Devi and the rest of the girls are currently being treated and housed in the EVAWSAN protection house in India. The girls want to go back home but are afraid of how their families and communities will react to them after being forced into sex slavery.

Small Group Exercise:

1. Choose a group based on your interest.
2. Based on the scenario given above and the communication goals defined, brainstorm on the following:
 - What are the values that will inform your communication activities, processes and products?
 - Who are your audience? Define up to 3 audience/s

- What messages are you sending your audience? Define up to 3 messages / audience.
 - How will you relay your message to your audience? (Tools / channels / activities)
 - What communication products will you develop?
3. Fill in the table provided to your group.
 4. Develop sample products. For example, if the product you have in mind is a poster, make that poster. Or if you want a website, draw how you would want that website to look like.

Report Back and Synthesis (1 hour)