

////////////////////////////////////
THE COMMUNICATOR
The USAID PHN Newsletter for CAs
Volume 1 Number 1
September 2001
////////////////////////////////////

IN THIS ISSUE

- Why this newsletter?
- Why Now?
- Writing to Make Connections
- The Wired Media
- Including the Media in Your Communications Planning
- Your Turn
- What Others are Doing
- Feedback
- How to Subscribe and Unsubscribe

WHY THIS NEWSLETTER?

Welcome to the first issue of USAID's informal, bimonthly email newsletter for CAs, missions, and other partners. We want to use this forum to share with technical and communications staff the whys and hows of effective communications/public relations so we can become better informed while better informing others. No matter whether our audience includes donors, media, the boards of directors, organizational constituencies, the general public, or other groups, it's important that we make them care about what we do.

The goals for this newsletter are simple:

- To increase the flow of information between PHN and CAs engaged in communications/public relations work
- To discuss global health issues, and define approaches that will help us all to inform and educate
- To enhance the news about the work we are doing and why it is important

The idea for The Communicator came from April's communications seminar sponsored by Management Sciences for Health (MSH), titled Cultivating Stories: From the Technical to the Topical (<http://www.msh.org/seminars/index.html> once you're in the index, you can click on to the transcript for this seminar).

.....
WHY NOW?

Given the rapid changes in technology combined with the proliferation of 24-hour news, the only way we'll get attention is to write stories that grab people. We have not only to present clear, accurate information about global health issues, but we must do so in compelling ways. That's what this newsletter is for. We also can use each other's expertise in proactive communications efforts. And there is no time like the present to start. We've heard from some missions about media campaigns designed to cast doubt on the effectiveness of condoms in preventing the transmission of HIV/AIDS during sex and on the safety of modern hormonal contraceptives.

Using radio interviews, videos, brochures, stickers, and interpersonal communication, the messages are that condoms do not protect against the HIV virus and that such contraceptive methods as Depo Provera, the IUD, and others cause cancer, infertility, birth defects, blindness, swollen kidneys, diabetes, and suicidal depression. These messages could undermine HIV/AIDS prevention and reproductive health promotion programs.

USAID has responded by sending a memo to all our missions alerting them to this campaign and reiterating USAID's bottom line regarding the efficacy of condoms: consistent use of male condoms significantly reduces the risk of HIV infection in men and women as well as gonorrhea in men. This position was reaffirmed in June 2001 during an extensive review of all available studies conducted by a panel convened by the US National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, USAID, the World Health Organization, and other organizations. If you want more information about USAID's position or information regarding the efficacy of condoms from the report, click here: USAID talking points (<http://www.phnip.com/news/condeffect.html>) NIH Report on Condoms (<http://www.phnip.com/news/condreport.html>)

Because this campaign affects all our work, we would like your help in identifying proactive and field-driven measures to combat the misinformation. If you can prepare letters to the editors, op-eds, and other materials for your in-country representatives to use, if you know of folks who can work with their media in country, if you have good spokespeople that we could use for quick response for interviews, or if you have other ideas to propose, please contact Sandra Jordan (sjordan@usaid.gov).

.....

WRITING TO MAKE CONNECTIONS

In his "Overview from the Chair" section of the UN Foundation's 1999 Annual Report, Ted Turner, no stranger to the problems in the developing world, wrote: 'For a baby in Maputo... born prematurely with AIDS, the fight for survival into a better world is heart-wrenching. I saw that helpless infant in the Maputo Central Hospital Until then, I had conceptualized the disaster of AIDS in Africa and of infant mortality among the poor everywhere largely in terms of horrific, but somewhat abstract numbers. Since then, I have come to see in immediate, human terms how that child's fight, its future and the future of all children born with the handicap of poverty are the challenge and the

responsibility of all the rest of us." Turner engaged readers with the poignancy of his personal experience, giving AIDS a "human face."

Douglas Franz's New York Times article (7-1-01) offers another example of this technique: "Ibrahim Betil was standing outside a mobile classroom in southeastern Turkey recently when a teenager approached, a flock of 20 or 25 sheep trailing in his wake." "Can you take care of these sheep so I can see the computers?" asked the young shepherd, who explained that he had heard friends talk about such wondrous machines." "No problem," said Mr. Betil, a former bank executive who devotes time to a pioneering nonprofit education program he founded in Turkey and who works occasionally as a substitute shepherd." "

With two-thirds of its 66 million people under age 35, Turkey has one of the world's youngest populations, a huge potential resource for a developing economy. But deficiencies in the centralized national education system have left many without skills.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/07/01/world/01TURK.html>

You can do this kind of storytelling in your reports or in contacts with press. When systems seem unconnected to people, consider the endpoint. Operations work is done to benefit people. For example, streamlining a financial system to make a clinic efficient will allow a malnourished baby to be treated more quickly. There's your story - the endpoint, the baby.

.....
THE WIRED MEDIA

Even if your communications strategy does not involve intensive work with the media, remember they may be working with you nevertheless. Journalists use the Internet for story ideas, as an information source, and to pick up press releases. According to the Middleberg/Ross Survey of Media in the Wired World, such use is at an all-time high. The survey polled more than 500 journalists in the U.S. and concluded the following:

- 81% of print respondents search online daily
- Going online for sources, stories, and press releases is widespread, and email is quickly surpassing the telephone as the preferred method for interviewing sources
- When news breaks, magazine reporters turn to corporate Web sites for information if a live source is not available
- Approximately 1/3 of all broadcasters use Web audio files, and 1/5 want video files as well

Don Middleberg, one of the survey's gurus, is convinced that "the increasing use of the Net ...emphasizes the need to communicate quickly and think globally."

.....

INCLUDING MEDIA IN YOUR COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING

Press coverage is a powerful tool for teaching about and winning support for the work your agencies accomplish. Share the media work you've done, or ask for assistance if you'd like to do more. The MCA Public Relations newsletter lists 20 ways to use a press release effectively at <http://www.mcapublicrelations.com/20ways.html>

.....

YOUR TURN

Tell your story. Send us cases in point from your experiences. Let us know how you got the information, how you used it, and how it could be used even more effectively. Or send us your questions about how you can include this kind of information in your work.

Here's one good use of a story to get you started thinking:

Penelope Riseborough, senior communications associate at Management Sciences for Health, and Carmen Urdaneta, external relations officer for The Management and Leadership Development Project, uncovered this story in South Africa after an AIDS conference.

"We spent a week observing and learning about the USAID-funded EQUITY project.... After we visited an informal settlement and observed TB DOTS workers doing their job, the story pretty much wrote itself. It was originally intended for MSH's internal newsletter, but after our colleagues at EQUITY read it, they circulated it more widely."

Community Health Workers Making a Difference

By Penelope Riseborough and Carmen Urdaneta

Driving through East London to Bisho, where the Equity Project office and the Eastern Cape Department of Health are located, we passed by "informal settlements"-- slum housing that has sprung up around townships and in peri-urban areas. One of these settlements, located near East London, is called Mzamomhle. An estimated 10,000-20,000 people live in Mzamomhle, sometimes eight people to a small shack. This is not where one might expect to find a clean, efficient clinic. But the Zanempilo Clinic is such a place. This clinic provides primary health care (PHC) services, including family planning, and STD/HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis (TB) counseling and care. Three years ago, with Equity Project support, Zanempilo started sending community health workers (CHWs) out through the settlement to increase the reach of the clinic. (Click to continue the story and view the pictures: <http://www.phnip.com/news/healthworkers.htm>)

.....

WHAT OTHERS ARE DOING

To commemorate Earth Day 2001, CARE launched a virtual field trip to Ecuador, taking Web readers on an eco-adventure into one of South America's last remaining coastal rainforests. Take a Rainforest Journey to Ecuador with CARE:
http://www.care.org/virtual_trip/ecuador/

If you haven't read PRIME Voices, a new email series bringing you a monthly story from the PRIME II Project, you should. Prime Voices is an excellent example of finding innovative ways to tell your organizational story.

The series highlights important results from PRIME programs while also telling about individuals who have benefited from the Project's work. To subscribe, contact David Nelson at Intrah, dnelson@intrah.org. General assemblies and special sessions at the United Nations are excellent ways to provide timely information on the topic at hand ' and provide an excellent public forum for you to disseminate information and show your leadership in the field. In June, the UN General Assembly held a special session to review the progress of the Istanbul Habitat II agenda setting out "approaches and strategies toward achievement of sustainable development of the world's urban areas." The Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs, working with USAID, released an overview of a report on population growth and urbanization that will be published next year. The results were great: The Washington Post ran a half page story in its front section, and the BBC and other news outlets ran interviews.

.....

YOUR FEEDBACK

With your participation this newsletter can increase our interaction and participation in regards to getting the word out about what we do. Let us know what you would like to see in this newsletter, what topics you want covered, or what additional items should be included to make it. We also encourage you to become a contributor: Pass along stories about your program, including poignant accounts, major accomplishments, new publications, awards received, or upcoming conferences to dgupta@phn.pal-tech.com.

If you know people who should get this newsletter, let us know so we can add them to our subscribers list.

.....

To subscribe to The Communicator by email, please send a blank message to <mailto:PHNNews@phnip.com> with the word "subscribe" in the subject line.

To unsubscribe from The Communicator, please send a blank message to <mailto:PHNNews@phnip.com> with the word "unsubscribe" in the subject line.