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COMMUNICATION PLAN 2009

Enhancing and popularising environmental issues among key stakeholders in Rwanda through the Poverty Environment Initiative (PEI)

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Poverty Environment Initiative (PEI) was launched in November 2005 and will run until December 2009. The project is executed by Government of Rwanda through MINIRENA and implemented by REMA in close collaboration with MINECOFIN. The PEI in Rwanda has been funded through UNEP with funds from the Government of Belgium, Norway and Ireland with contributions from UNDP Rwanda.

A significant component of the support to environmental mainstreaming that was undertaken by PEI in the first phase was to raise public awareness on poverty-environment links. Radio- and TV-programmes were e.g. featured covering topical issues on poverty and environment.

A relatively broader approach for enhanced awareness among stakeholders is an essential component of PEI phase II. These involve television, radio, and print media as well as other appropriate avenues for creating awareness on poverty environment issues.

The current aim for the forthcoming communication activities is to ensure the broad coverage of environmental issues in Rwanda and poverty environment relationships in particular and will be geared to support Rwanda Environment Management Authority (REMA) in its operationalisation of the environmental protection mandate. This approach will facilitate the implementation of environmental issues and concerns during as well as after the programme-period.

REMA, having the overall responsibility for management of the biophysical environment throughout Rwanda has a key function in implementing Government environment policy and decisions. REMA also advise the Government and other entities engaged in natural resource management and environmental protection.

1.1 OVERALL OBJECTIVE

Within the PEI II framework an action plan has been developed to support the overall objective (output 3):

- Increased awareness and more effective participation of stakeholders in environmental policy and planning processes at both district and national level.

1.2 THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION

Planned communication is a vital instrument to become more systematic and to better focus communications in order to maximise the probability of success in attaining the objectives laid out in the PEI framework.

Communication – when adequately planned - facilitates the management of dialogue. It can also help foresee and take preventive action against communication problems that otherwise might occur and jeopardise PEI's contributions.

Communication has a key role in spreading awareness about sustainable development and in making the objectives of projects/programmes accessible and understandable.

Planned internal communication ensures that staff has correct and complete information about decisions, processes, and other relevant conditions within the organisation to be better equipped to conduct an efficient effort.

1.3 THE PURPOSE OF THE COMMUNICATION PLAN

The purpose of this communication plan is to support the implementation of the planned and budgeted PEI communications efforts under output 3 for 2009. The plan includes two parts; i) a strategy for the effective implementation of planned communication activities and ii) an action plan.

The communication plan is two-folded covering different types of communication at PEI:

- External communication - in the sense of dialogue, awareness raising, promotion and advocacy to influence changes at policy level and promote issues related to development.
- Internal communication - in the sense of dialogue, improved collaboration and coordination to ensure timely and effective sharing of relevant information within the PEI staff and institution units.

2. NEEDS FOR COMMUNICATION – AN OVERVIEW

The following chapter contains an overview of the communication needs of the various stakeholders identified under the PEI framework.

The overview is based on earlier experience from activities conducted during PEI phase I and part of phase II, on interviews with key stakeholders and on documents/surveys carried out in other project/programmes relevant to PEI Rwanda.

In general Rwanda's successful transition from recovery to sustainable development will largely depend on sustainable management of its natural resource base. Rwanda has experienced environmental problems and constraints that have resulted in serious environmental degradation. One factor that has impeded effective implementation of environmental management and the "Rio Conventions", according to the UNDAF 2008-2012 Rwanda, is a low understanding and awareness of environmental issues among several key stakeholders.

Key external stakeholders identified under the PEI II framework under output 3 are:

- National and local decision-makers (including local and national government staff and parliamentarians)
- General public
- Media/journalists
- Private sector
- Education sector
- Donors and development partners.

Key internal stakeholders include:

- PMU
- PEI steering committee and task team
- REMA-staff

NATIONAL AND LOCAL DECISION-MAKERS

Progress to date

During PEI Phase I a cross-ministerial Task Team and a Stakeholder Consultative Group was established to ensure effective stakeholder consultation and strong collaboration between GoR, UNEP and UNDP. The evidence and advocacy provided by PEI were instrumental in including environment both as a crosscutting issue and an independent sector in the EDPRS 2008-2012.

Advocacy papers, environmental checklists to guide integration of environment into sector strategies, various briefing notes to MINECOFIN about the relevance of environment to national development objectives and guidelines for mainstreaming environment, have been produced and had a significant impact on the EDPRS process. Most other sectors have already taken on board environmental recommendations in their sector logframes. PEI has also ensured the participation of environment mainstreaming specialists in the logframe development process conducted by each sector further facilitating the integration of environment across all sectors.

Challenges

Even though environment is both a cross-cutting issue and an independent sector in the EDPRS, national and local decision-makers (including local and national government staff and parliamentarians) needs to be updated and informed about e.g. the importance of mainstreaming poverty-environment links into planning.

According to some key stakeholders the issue of long-term sustainability is a concern and that there is a need for continuous support in terms of both dialogue and access to information of the EDPRS implementation for environmental mainstreaming at both national and district level.

GENERAL PUBLIC

Progress to date

Under PEI phase I the main channels used to inform the general public were TV and radio. No surveys have been made so far on the effectiveness.

A UN-survey shows though that the general public is vaguely aware on environmental issues and that other issues such as economy and health are higher on the agenda. But the survey also shows that there is an expressed need among Rwandans to be better informed on issues that can improve their lives. This is basically what the PEI is about and thus has to be communicated.

According to media surveys radio is the most effective media in terms of reaching a large audience.

Challenges

A well-informed and aware general public is important for an accountable and effective participation of stakeholders in the implementation of sector strategies.

One of the main challenges in informing and influencing peoples awareness is to translate PEI findings into clear and understandable messages that relates to people's everyday lives.

MEDIA/JOURNALISTS

Progress to date

Media in itself is a channel that can be utilised to enhance and popularise environmental issues among different stakeholders. It is well known that the use of radio is high in Rwanda among the general public, and that TV, printed media and the internet reaches mainly other stakeholders such as the private sector, government officials and development partners. Apart from TV and radio targeting the general public there has been no efforts made to target the media.

According to a UN survey there is a challenge (see above) in terms of putting the environment higher on the agenda. Journalists in general write stories/articles on issues high on the agenda. Thus the links between economy and social issues (high on the agenda) needs to be linked to the environment (relatively low on the agenda).

Challenges

One way to increase the media coverage (and the quality) on environmental issues – whether it is through radio, TV or printed media – is to train journalists to develop a better understanding of poverty-environment links.

PRIVATE SECTOR

Progress to date

The private sector is relatively unaware of PE-links and also on business opportunities linked with environmental management. In general there is a lack of understanding of REMAs mandate and role. This might hamper future implementation related to sustainable development. REMA is often linked to the ban of polythene and there is a wish to move away from this. REMA is also perceived, among some actors in the private sector, as an agency that hinders development by protecting the environment.

A good working relationship with the private sector is important. Focus on opportunities linked to environmental management and how REMA with its expertise can be a partner is essential. A donor for example state in a country report that some companies reports that the legislation on environmental protection is complicated and non-transparent and that this sometimes creates problems for the private sector.

Challenges

There is a need to improve the dialogue with the private sector and highlight opportunities linked with environmental management. The private sector is generally not aware on environmental legislation and REMAs mandate and role.

SCHOOLS (FORMAL AND INFORMAL EDUCATION LEVELS)

Progress to date

One of the measures to increase awareness in schools promoted by Rwanda Environment Management Authority (REMA) through the Poverty Environment Initiative (PEI) is Environmental Education for Sustainable Development (EESD). REMA has, for example, trained senior secondary teachers in the field of chemistry, biology and geography on issues of environmental policy, the Organic Law and how environmental clubs can be established in schools countrywide.

The purpose of environmental clubs is to make a difference in schools and to create ambassadors of environmental issues. In this regard students has been involved in activities such as planting of trees, grass and cleanliness in their school compound. Students from environmental clubs have also participated in activities such as World Environment Day 2008. REMA has also targeted student leaders in universities and high institutions of learning on environmental concerns.

Challenges

Bring more schools aboard. Continue the efforts in the field of EESD and take adequate measures to promote environmental education, training and sensitization in schools curricula at all levels.

DONORS AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

Progress to date

Government of Belgium and Government of Norway (through UNEP), UNDP-Rwanda funded PEI I. Government of Ireland (through UNEP) is providing the majority of the funds for the second phase with some contributions from UNDP Rwanda. Information is regularly shared between PMU and donors.

Challenges

Donors and development partners needs to be continuously informed about PE-links and its role in development. Experiences from PEI Rwanda need to be shared.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Progress to date

The PEI project has been running for almost four years which means that facts and figures are in place, stakeholders are identified and mapped and most of the stakeholders needs are also identified.

According to the interviews there is a need to document earlier experiences so that they can be used (e.g. good examples on natural resource management) in future communication efforts.

Other concerns regarding internal communications impacting on daily work was that access to information material was quite poor.

Challenges

In order to fulfil the overall objective it is necessary to share information internally and to strengthen the capacity within REMA on environmental communication.

There is also a need to document earlier experiences so that the experiences can be used (e.g. good examples on natural resource management) in future communication efforts.

3. STRATEGY

3.1 OVERALL OBJECTIVE

The objective of the communication plan is to raise awareness about the links between poverty and environment among key strategic stakeholders and thus contribute to achieve the following overall PEI objective (output 3):

- Increased awareness and more effective participation of stakeholders in environmental policy and planning processes at both district and national level.

To support the overall objective the communication plan will ensure the broad coverage of environmental issues in Rwanda and poverty environment relationships in particular and will be geared to support Rwanda Environment Management Authority (REMA) in its operationalisation of the environmental protection mandate.

3.2 TARGET GROUPS

Target groups will be further defined in the Action Plan where they are linked to the activities, outlined for each communication objective.

From the analysis and mapping of stakeholders the following are the priority main target groups:

External

- National and local decision-makers (including local and national government staff and parliamentarians)
- General public
- Media/Journalists
- Private sector
- Schools (formal and informal education levels)
- Donors and development partners

Internal

- Project Management Unit
- Steering committee and Task Team
- REMA Staff

3.3 COMMUNICATION GOALS/SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

Communication will support the overall objective in the following way:

External

- Familiarise national and local decision-makers (including local and national government staff, parliamentarians etc.) to the links between poverty and environment for incorporation into the planning processes.
- Increase public interest in environmental issues.
- Increase frequency, accuracy and quality of media reporting on environmental issues in local media.
- Promote increased support among the private sector.
- Increase awareness in schools through environmental education.
- Promote networking and information sharing among PEI/REMA stakeholders such as donors and development partners.

Internal

- Ensure that information is regularly shared within the PMU.
- Ensure that information is regularly shared with the Task Team and Steering Committee.
- Increase PEI/REMA staffs capacities and capabilities in communication.

3.4 OVERALL MESSAGE (S)

The use of appropriate language and style and the mode of transmission must be carefully considered when addressing different audiences. The requirements for translating and appropriate budgeting must be factored.

The content of messages depends on the level of knowledge of audiences, their expectations and the purpose of the communication. Communication will be tailored in general as:

External	National and local decision-makers (local government, parliamentarians etc.): continue to support implementation (dialogue and advocacy)
	General public: raise awareness on environment and PE-links
	Journalists: raise awareness on environment and PE-links
	Private sector: raise awareness on PE-links and business opportunities, promote dialogue
	Schools: raise awareness on environment and PE-links, create ambassadors
	Donors and development partners: keep updated and share practises
Internal	Keep updated, share information and raise awareness

3.5 METHODS/CHANNELS

The strategy focuses on the channels already proposed in the action plan in place.

In order to reach the general public broad media channels such as Radio, TV and Newspapers will be used. This approach together with more qualitative measures to specific audiences such as training of journalists and environmental education for selected schools and students are believed to create a mix that contributes to fulfil the objectives in this strategy.

Written: pressreleases, articles, policy briefs, REMA Newsletter, brochures

Face-to-face: training, seminars and pressconference

Massmedia: Radio- and TV-programmes

3.6 SENDER

To enhance REMAs role/mandate and commitment REMA should be the main sender of the products distributed within the programme.

3.7 TIME FRAME

The communication strategy shall apply for activities during 2009. Activities in the action plan shall be revised continuously.

4. FOLLOW-UP (MONITOR AND EVALUATION)

The activities will be monitored and evaluated in three different levels: process, outcome and impact. The monitoring and evaluation will be done on a continuous basis.

- Quantitative (Process) – what messages were communicated to how many people, where and how often?
- Qualitative (Outcome and Impact) – what was the change in the audience/s awareness, attitudes or behaviour and what impact had the activities on the overall objective?

A proposal on how to monitor and evaluate the communication activities is attached in Appendix 2.

APPENDIX 1: ACTION PLAN 2009

See separate attachment

APPENDIX 2: MONITORING AND EVALUATION

See separate attachment