

Ideas for Water Awareness Campaigns



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Contents

INTRODUCTION

1 STRATEGIES FOR AWARENESS RAISING

- 1.1 Awareness, knowledge, attitudes and behavior 9
- 1.2 Different strategies and modes of campaigning 13



2 PLANNING AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

- 2.1 Preprogram research 18
- 2.2 Message positioning 21
- 2.3 Selecting communication channels and pre-testing 22
- 2.4 Preparing an integrated program 25



3 ADVOCACY -INFLUENCING LEADERS

- 3.1 Political advocacy 30
- 3.2 Religious leaders 31
- 3.3 Involving other persons of influence 33



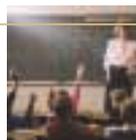
4 INVOLVING THE CORPORATE AND NONPROFIT SECTORS

- 4.1 Working with the corporate sector 35
- 4.2 Working with the nonprofit sector 39
- 4.3 Combining campaigning efforts 40



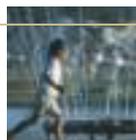
5 EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

- 5.1 Setting up school programs 44
- 5.2 In-class ideas 47
- 5.3 Other activities 50



6 YOUNG PEOPLE AS PROMOTERS AND ACTIVISTS

- 6.1 Youth and water conservation 53
- 6.2 Youth and the ecological value of water 54
- 6.3 Youth and sanitation and hygiene 57



7 AWARENESS AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- 7.1 Supporting public participation 59
- 7.2 Developing volunteer networks 61



8 MEDIA AND MATERIAL

- 8.1 Choosing the right media/materials package 63
- 8.2 Organizational aspects of producing material 64
- 8.3 Ideas for TV or radio broadcasts 65
- 8.4 Other media/material ideas 66
- 8.5 Designing material 68



9 PUBLIC RELATIONS

- 9.1 Image and values 74
- 9.2 Attracting attention 74
- 9.3 Contacts with the media 75



10 ORGANIZING PUBLIC EVENTS

- 10.1 Festivals and exhibits 78
- 10.2 Culture and arts 80
- 10.3 Outdoor manifestations 81



11 INTERNET

- 11.1 Campaigning on the net 84
- 11.2 Ideas for using the internet in campaigns 85
- 11.3 Some tips for designing websites 87
- 11.4 Internet as an information source for the water sector 88



APPENDIX 1. List of initiatives 91

APPENDIX 2. Resources 109

2.1 Educational resources and material 109

2.2 Other resources 111

APPENDIX 3. Additional tools 115

3.1 Literature cited 115

3.2 List of acronyms 117

3.3 List of illustrations 118

3.4 Acknowledgements 119

Introduction



"None of this will happen without public awareness and mobilization campaigns, to bring home to people the extent and the causes of the current and impending water crisis."

Kofi Annan on the occasion of the UN Millennium Forum

There is growing recognition of the importance of social norms and attitudes in the management of water. Recent main policy documents recognize the importance of awareness raising to influence these norms and values towards a more sustainable use of water resources. All over the world new initiatives have been launched in the last decade. Large international agencies, governments, local citizens' groups, drinking-water providers, international and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and educational networks all have unique and interesting experiences. Their ideas are often innovative, attractive and have a potential to appeal to large audiences.

This book attempts to bring together many of these ideas, from a variety of organizations working in a diverse range of countries. Hopefully, it will be useful as a resource for a variety of people such as:

- Professionals in the water sector who have realized the importance of public awareness.
- People working on water publicity campaigns and educational programs who want to know both what is going on in other initiatives and what material and resources are already available.
- Small and large NGO groups trying to find ways to expand their reach and incorporate new ideas.
- Organizations looking for partners to start new initiatives with.
- Policy makers who want to glance into the public awareness side of the water sector.

One of the problems with existing information is its fragmentation. Usually, it is only available as project documentation, offering general overviews of projects and focusing on various topics besides awareness raising. Systematic exchange of awareness raising ideas is difficult. Documentation, with experiences from more than one initiative is often limited to one part of the water sector, for example, only basic education on water conservation or promotion of education on hygiene. Much can be learnt by exchanging and comparing the experiences of very different initiatives within the water sector. There are several main reasons why systematic awareness raising on water is needed:

Water conservation

Evidence from several campaigns shows that awareness-building can effectively reduce water demand. For example, in Zaragoza, Spain, a large water conservation awareness-campaign made it unnecessary to raise the level of a reservoir, as had been planned earlier.

Promoting education on hygiene

Similarly, in the sanitation and hygiene sector, awareness of hygiene is now considered a necessary complement to the construction of latrines. Without an understanding of hygiene-related health issues, the use of safe sanitary facilities is likely to be suboptimal.

Preservation of wet ecosystems

The number of volunteers involved in the preservation of rivers, lakes, marshes and estuaries is remarkable. The large amount of public attention for environmental conservation and the large number of NGOs campaigning on this topic have been a great support for this movement. Volunteer-lobbying networks, river-monitoring and clean-up programs have been created, often with the help of community groups, schools and religious organizations.

Supporting participatory interventions

Awareness and being motivated to change are essential in participatory interventions. Participation is based on the idea that people have the right to be involved in issues concerning them. Awareness raising and education can help stimulate active and informed involvement.

Developing self-regulating water institutions

Having seen groundwater disasters elsewhere, the acute understanding of the dangers of overpumping caused farmers in the arid Panjgur District in Pakistan to impose a ban on the use of tube wells, thus salvaging the group-owned horizontal well systems. Awareness can be a very important drive for communities to establish and improve local institutions for the management of water resources.

Pushing for policy changes

Awareness raising can also help create social pressure on governments and other water users. It can support a drive for policy changes in favor of better water management and build political will.

Building a more water-aware new generation

The school children of today will be the leaders and doers of tomorrow. This is all the more reason to make wise water use part of the school curricula.

Summarizing...

All in all, the number of unique awareness raising initiatives in the water sector is surprisingly large. This book attempts to bring together the many ideas developed in these initiatives. Sometimes, they will be combined with suggestions from communications theory and commercial marketing but the emphasis will remain on practical suggestions and clues. This book does not intend to be a comprehensive how-to-do book but, hopefully, it will be a source of inspiration and a starting point for many new ideas and initiatives.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

- Do not feel you have to read everything. The book has been set up in such a way that you can browse through it easily.
- Most chapters consist of an introduction to the topic, followed by ideas from different initiatives. Usually, these ideas have been arranged under three or four different headings per chapter. These headings can be found in the tabs along the side of each page.
- Along with each idea, the campaign from which it originates is mentioned, unless it is an idea not particular to one specific campaign.
- In appendix 1, you will find a short description of each initiative, along with information on its website, address, and e-mail (if available). So, if you are interested in a certain idea and would like to know from what kind of campaign it has originated, you will find the relevant information here, arranged per country.
- Remember that ideas can be very culture-specific. Some ideas are not necessarily useful in another cultural context, whereas others need rigorous adaptation to local values and institutions.

HOW THE BOOK IS SET UP

Figure 1 has been prepared to help you navigate through the text. The first two chapters give the background that may help in setting up a water awareness campaign, discussing, first, brief basic concepts in awareness-building (chapter 1) and, next, suggestions on how to plan a campaign (chapter 2).

Chapters 3 to 7, and 9 give practical examples on how to involve major partners, decision-makers and leaders, corporate and nonprofit organizations, educational institutes, youth groups, and communities and the media. Chapters 8, 10 and 11 discuss the preparation of awareness tools: the preparation of material, and the organization of events and the use of the internet. Appendix 2 contains information on educational resources, material and other sources while appendix 3 gives a list of literature cited.



Figure 1. Content map of the "Ideas Book:" Topic and chapter.

The ideas have been adopted from various sources: project documentation, information on the internet, brochures and personal communication. We have tried to stay as close to the original initiatives as possible; however, ideas have been simplified and sometimes certain aspects of these ideas are emphasized more than others. Please keep in mind that they remain *our* interpretation of the ideas.

The fact that an example is mentioned does not imply the project was successful; only that the idea from that project is of interest. Please note that ideas or the way they should be executed may be very much culture- or context-specific. Critical reflection on this issue is required before an idea from another initiative can be adopted or adapted.