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State Border Guard Republic of Latvia

Effective Communication

A HANDBOOK FOR LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES IN THE BORDER REGIONS OF CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES

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Border Management Programme in Central Asia (BOMCA) – Phase 10
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Acknowledgements

This Handbook is one of the outcomes of the **Workshop on Effective Communication for Local Self-Government Authorities in the Border Areas of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan**, held in January–February 2023 as part of the 4th component of the Border Management Programme in Central Asia – Phase 10 (BOMCA 10).

Component 4 aims to *strengthen cross-border cooperation to improve living conditions in border areas through local economic development with a focus on human rights, gender equality and vulnerable groups*. The implementation of the specific objectives of the Programme contributes to the achievement of the overall goal of increasing security, stability and sustainable growth in the Central Asian region, as well as supporting cross-border cooperation and improving living conditions for people living in the border areas of Central Asia. The workshop was part of the Programme's efforts to support partners in order to improve their communication activities, including direct communication with the local population in border areas.

The workshop was held in two countries. The first two days (30–31 January 2023) were in Osh, Kyrgyzstan, after which the participants visited the Dostuk and Dustlik checkpoints on the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border for familiarization purposes; the fourth and fifth days (2–3 February) were in Andijan. The participants were local leaders in the border areas of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, or their deputies, who provide information and other services directly to the population in their regions.

The activities in the two cities, and the visits to the checkpoints and border areas, were aimed at improving information exchange and work with the local population, giving participants a better understanding of the local conditions of both sides on the ground, when crossing the border, as well as the difficulties, challenges and opportunities that each side faces.

The BOMCA 10 Programme, as well as the Programme experts and the authors of this Handbook, **Ms Aigul Bolotova, Ms Irina Chistiakova and Mr Dainius Radzevicius**, are especially grateful to the representatives of local authorities of the border areas of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan for their active participation in the workshop and open exchange of experience. The authors are also grateful to the European Union for providing funding for the implementation of this initiative, as well as to the BOMCA 10 Programme team for their support in preparing and holding the event.

Summary

Representatives of local authorities are constantly involved in communications of various types and must be able to use the advantages and opportunities of each.

This Handbook provides detailed information on the basics, elements and channels of communication and discusses the basic principles of effective communication, which include the ability to convey information to the recipient in order to achieve the desired result, as well as the skills and personal qualities that contribute to effective communication. It also offers techniques for improving the effectiveness of communications that are relevant for local governments working with the populations of the border areas of Central Asian countries. This information is available in **Chapter 1**.

Chapter 2 explains what a communication strategy is and how to use one as a working document for building effective communication between local authorities and the population in border areas. It examines in detail the structure of such a strategy, the definition of the goals and objectives, and the target audience and its segmentation, as well as the development of strategic approaches in communications, the preparation of a communication plan and the indicators for measuring success in communication. The chapter also includes a Monitoring and Evaluation section to help evaluate and assess the effectiveness of communication activities.

The practical assignments at the end of each section will help the reader to explore the material in more detail and consider how it applies in practice.

The Additional Resources section provides links to resources that may be useful to those wishing to learn more about the organisation of communication work, including in the field of migration.

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List of abbreviations and acronyms

BOMCA 10	Border Management Programme in Central Asia (BOMCA) – Phase 10
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
CP	Checkpoint

Introduction

This Handbook has been developed under the Border Management Programme in Central Asia – Phase 10 (BOMCA 10). This phase began in April 2021 and is currently the leading and largest programme in the region funded by the European Union. The duration of the current phase is 54 months.

Since its launch in 2003, the various phases of the BOMCA programme have focused on capacity building and institutional development, improving the border management system and eliminating drug trafficking, developing trade corridors and facilitating trade in the Central Asian region. Each subsequent phase has built on the results of the previous ones.

Thus, Phase 10 aims ***to enhance security, stability, sustainable economic development and integrated border management. The current phase also supports cross-border cooperation and aims to improve living conditions for people in the border areas of Central Asia.***

Component 4 of the programme aims ***to strengthen cross-border cooperation in order to improve living conditions in border areas through local economic development, with a focus on human rights, gender equality and support for vulnerable groups.*** The component, among other things, targets work with local authorities, civil society and non-governmental organizations. Its objectives include supporting cross-border cooperation and strengthening the capacity of local governments for work with border area populations and subsequent improvement of the quality of services provided to them.

Bearing in mind the importance of effective communication for local government staff working with the border area population, the BOMCA 10 programme actively supports the development of professional communication skills among local government representatives working with the population on both sides of the border. The Workshop on Effective Communication for Local Self-Government Authorities in the Border Areas of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan', held in Osh, Kyrgyzstan, and Andijan, Uzbekistan, for representatives of local authorities in the two countries, was part of the support provided by BOMCA 10 in this area.

The workshop's ultimate goal was to improve the participants' communication skills and, most importantly, to ensure more effective communication and better awareness of border area populations, as well as effective and strategic planning of communication activities. Over its five days, the participants had the opportunity not only to acquire theoretical knowledge, but also to put into practice what they learned about developing a communication strategy, identifying and segmenting target audiences, and planning communication events at the local level.

This Handbook aims to improve the communication activities of public authorities at the local level. It contains practical advice on conducting work in the field of communication, as well as building communication with the population. The material is based on the work done by a team of expert authors for the workshop, and can thus help the workshop participants to share what they learned with their local authority colleagues.

Chapter 1. Basics of communication

Section 1.1. What is communication?

Communication (from the Latin '*communicatio*' ('imparting')) is the **process** of exchanging information between two or more people.

Depending on the participants in the communication and the nature of their interaction, three types of communication can be distinguished.

Interpersonal communication is direct communication between two or more people. Examples include telephone communications between colleagues, dialogues at dinner, conversations between travelling companions, individual work meetings, parent-child conversations and casual conversations between two unfamiliar passers-by on the street. Here, the individual personal characteristics of the participants in the interaction are especially important, and the effectiveness of the communication depends on how they perceive each other.

Group communication occurs when people interact not as individuals, but as representatives of certain social groups. Examples include meetings of heads of departments, planning meetings and company briefings, lectures, sports competitions and dialogues between local government representatives and residents. Accordingly, participants in such communication primarily represent the interests of their group, guided by its goals, norms and rules.

Mass communication involves an indefinite number of people, and their individual or group characteristics are completely unimportant, as the message here is intended neither for individuals, nor for groups, but for a mass audience. This audience can be categorized in terms of such features as gender, age, occupation, ethnicity, place of residence, socio-economic status (for example, movie viewers, readers of a newspaper or Telegram channel, social media page visitors, listeners to a radio station, etc.).

Local governments are constantly involved in communications of various types and must be able to use the advantages and opportunities of each.

To do this, [you need first to learn how to highlight the main elements of communication:](#)

The **sender** is the person (or organization) who is the source of the information transmitted.

The **recipient** is the person (or group or audience) who is to receive the information transmitted and needs to correctly and adequately understand it.

The **message** is the information transmitted, which should be made as clear and understandable as possible.



Additionally, any interaction involves a communication channel.

A **communication channel** is a tool by which a sender conveys a message to a recipient (person, group, or target audience). Depending on the type of communication, the channels also differ: a face-to-face conversation (interpersonal), a direct meeting in a local community (group) or a live broadcast to subscribers on your social media account (mass).

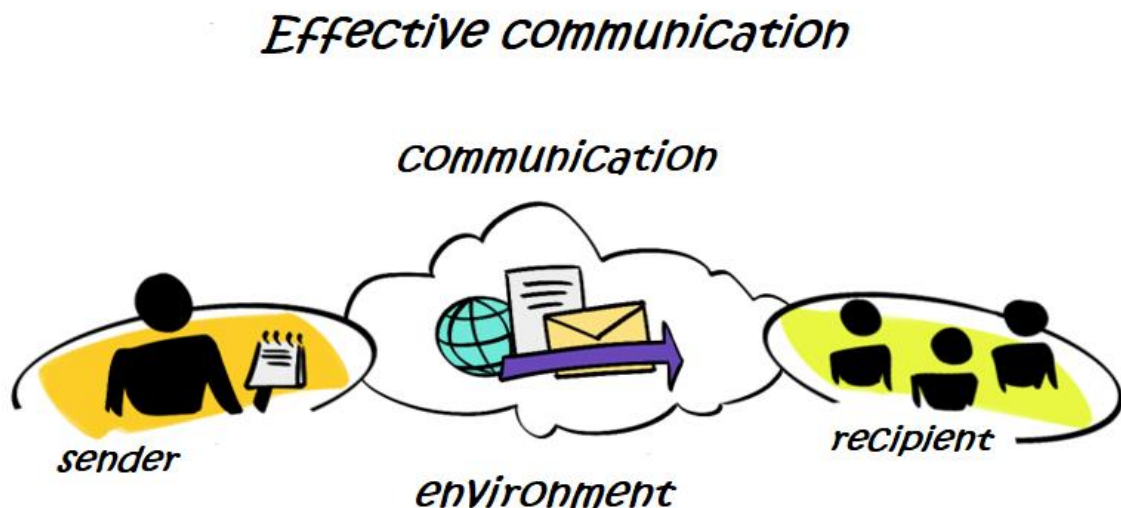
Another important point is that we choose the most effective message format (conversation, public speech, short video, etc.) depending on the channel. One way to be effective in communication is to choose and purposefully use the most suitable format.

Assignment: Recall and give examples from your professional activities when you were a participant in interpersonal, group or mass communication. In what format did you send your message (speech, chat message, letter, social media post, video, etc.)? In what format do you think you are the most persuasive? Why?

Section 1.2. Basic principles of effective communication

Effective communication is the ability to convey information to the recipient in order to achieve the desired result. The method of processing and transmitting information you choose depends on the type of communication and the characteristics of the audience. Your most important task to engage the information recipients as much as possible in the communication process.

This is possible when the transmission of information from the sender to the recipient takes place in an environment where the information is equally understood by both participants.



The effectiveness of any communication can be assessed subjectively and objectively.

Subjectively, we can evaluate the result of interaction by answering the question ‘What do I feel after the communication?’ Pleasure or disappointment? Resentment or joy? Having defined our emotion and whether the communication was a good or bad experience for us, we can subjectively evaluate its success or failure.

Objectively, we can assess the results of the communication and the extent to which its goals have been met. Here, it is important not only to be able to formulate the communication goal, but also to make it understandable and acceptable to all participants in the interaction.

Skills and personal qualities that contribute to effective communication:

- Hearing the essence (said and unsaid)
- Determining the communication results
- Speaking briefly and succinctly
- Perceiving information without judgement (actual thinking)
- Using a non-directive style of communication
- Focus

Assignment: *What do you think helps you achieve the desired result in different communication situations? What is your strength? What do you need to work on to be effective?*

Section 1.3. Techniques for improving personal effectiveness in communication

Be attentive to the interlocutor and use active listening techniques. For example, it is useful to ask relevant leading and clarifying questions, this will allow you to understand the interlocutor as accurately as possible.

Speak clearly, concisely and to the point. To do this, it is important to keep the focus on the communication goal. This will allow you not to be distracted by irrelevant details and to understand if your interlocutor moves the conversation away in time to return it to the main topic.

Stick to the facts. Avoid value judgements, interpretations and limiting attitudes in communication. Facts are something that can be verified (e.g. whether an event took place or not) and measured (in kilometres, grams, financial figures, etc.).

Convey not only the meaning, but also your emotions regarding the topic of discussion. If you are upset by the result of the conversation, say so, noting what you really wanted from it. Conversely, if you are satisfied, tell your interlocutor. By the way, keep in mind that an emotionally coloured speech will demonstrate your interest in the topic of discussion.

Appropriately use the three channels of communication: *verbal* (written and oral), *non-verbal* (posture, facial expressions, movement, look, gestures) and *paraverbal* (tone of voice, pace, intonation, articulation). All three are important and require our attention. What is most important here is that they be combined appropriately: HOW we look should correspond to WHAT and HOW we say. For example,

a business suit is a prerequisite for a meeting with management, but may be inappropriate for a meeting with friends.

Use technical means of communication (telephone, communication platforms, email, instant messengers, etc.). This will allow you to be mobile and responsible, and to select the most convenient communication channels for your various interlocutors. But do not forget that however busy you are, there should always be an opportunity for face-to-face meetings and direct communication with your main audience.

Assignment: *Think of any communication situation, preferably the one you find yourself in most often. For example, a meeting with local residents. Analyse your participation in this communication in terms of using the three channels: verbal (What do you usually say to people? How important is it for them? Do they find answers to their urgent questions in your speech?); non-verbal (How do you look at these meetings? What do you wear? What about your hairstyle, shoes and accessories?), paraverbal (How does your voice usually sound? High or low? Confident or confused? Monotonous or exciting? How quickly do you speak? How powerful is your voice? What about your diction?). After imagining yourself as a whole, think about what you would like to change in order to increase your impact on the interlocutor or audience.*

Chapter 2. Strategic communications in the work of local authorities

Section 2.1. What is a communication strategy?

A communication strategy is always a secondary strategic document. First of all, your organization/project/any activity should have a development strategy or strategic plan, or another document describing how you plan to achieve the main goals of your organization/project/activity.

The goals of a communication strategy always state the expected result that you can get using the communication tools. They answer the question 'What can communication with target audiences do to help achieve results for our organization / project / activity, given the conditions in which we exist?'

The 'foundation' of a communication strategy is the strategic goal (a long-term large-scale social, political, development goal), towards which, in fact, all your efforts are directed. This important point becomes clear when we understand that the communication strategy is only part of the overall strategy for achieving goals. It allows you to develop ways to inform your stakeholders, create and disseminate compelling messages, and develop platforms for dialogue.

Thus, the communication strategy includes a description of all the participants in the interaction, and the conditions and mechanisms of communication. When developing it, we define what needs to be transmitted, to whom, under what conditions and how, in order to achieve the desired effect. In its most general form, a communication strategy is a long-term resource-balanced programme for achieving strategic goals through information and communication interactions with the external and internal environment.

To achieve the goals of an organization/project/activity, it is necessary to be able to communicate them effectively and strategically. Communication plays an important role in winning public support and building the trust of those for whom you are working.

Assignment: Read your strategic goals and consider what sort of communications will be important in order for you to achieve them, and whom you need to communicate with. Who should know about your strategic goals? How can you communicate with them? Through what channels? In what formats? How often? What else do they need to know about your activities? How do they need to change their behaviour for your goals to be achieved? How can you persuade them to change their behaviour?

Section 2.2. Communication strategy structure

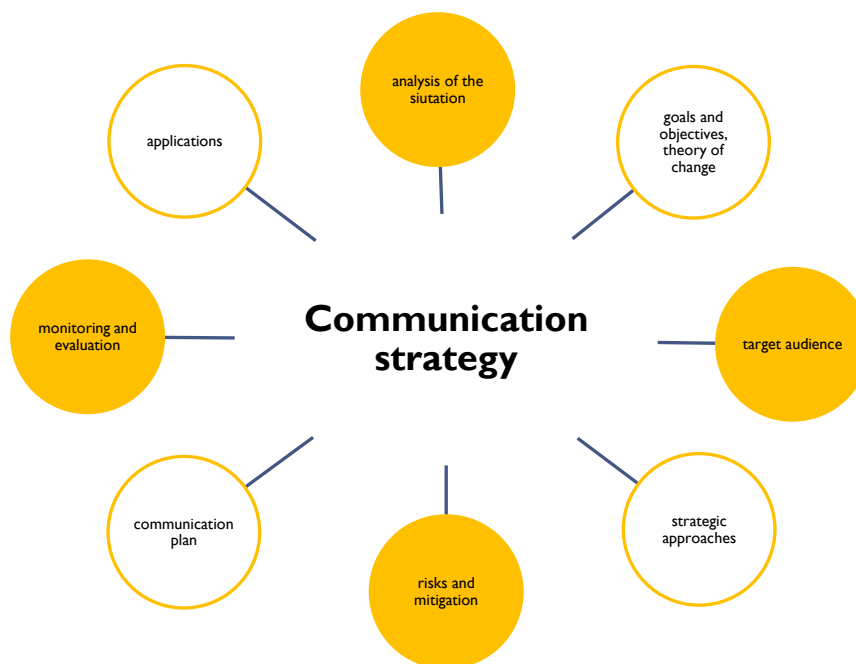
For a communication strategy to become a working tool, it must:

1. Clearly identify the people whose support is critical to the success of the organization/project/activity. This is your target audience. You will direct all the main impact on them (to know exactly who they are, it is important to map the stakeholders and prioritize them according to the degree of influence)
2. Describe the types of behaviour that, if you can persuade these people to implement them in daily practice, will help to achieve project goals
3. Contain messages (key messages) that are understandable and meaningful for your target audiences

4. Describe and explain how to use communication channels that will provide the necessary coverage of the audience, will be convenient and familiar to them and inspire confidence
5. Use the necessary methods and tools for assessing the effectiveness of communications
6. Contain a communication plan that establishes a time frame, timeline and budget and describes the specific communication activities to be implemented

The main elements of the structure of a communication strategy, which allow you to describe all these features most fully, are:

- Analysis of the situation
- Goals and objectives
- Target audience
- Strategic approaches
- Risks and mitigation
- Communication plan
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Applications



Structure

Assignment: Take your main strategy document and write down all its sections in a column to cover the structure of the document. Compare it with the structure of the communication strategy suggested in this section. What sections do they have common? What information in the main strategy document can you use in developing a communication strategy, and how?

Section 2.3. Situation analysis

Situation analysis is the very first step in successful strategic communications planning, providing the foundation and context for your organization's strategic communications plan.

Key questions for situation analysis:

- What is your organization's mission and vision?
- What is your current communication capacity, including staff, consultants and financial resources?
- How does your organization make communications decisions? How is information exchanged within it?
- What are your organization's communication strengths? What are your biggest problems?
- What are your organization's most urgent communications needs*?
- Is the media aware of your organization and the problems it is trying to solve?
- Who are the recipients of your information?

Another tool that will help you study the situation is a **SWOT analysis**.¹ This defines the situation from four angles — your organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats — in terms of effective communications.

Strengths and weaknesses are always information about your organization itself. To describe them, remember at least the last year of your work — your successes, achievements, failures, breakthroughs and jobs — and analyze them in terms of successful or unsuccessful communication.

Threats and opportunities are how the external environment affects your activities and the means you have to resist it or use it for your own purposes.

You can analyze the external environment in the following areas (but not only):

- Global, regional and local issues or achievements
- Key development trends, achievements of research or society
- Opportunities and limitations of the digital environment and technologies
- Legislation
- Social change
- Environment

After analysing these four aspects of the situation, you can use another tool: **SWOT synthesis**. To do so, look for communication solutions at the intersection of different blocks:

- Strengths and opportunities: use internal strengths to take advantage of opportunities

¹ **SWOT analysis** is a strategic planning method that entails identifying factors in an organization's internal and external environment and dividing them into four categories: 1) Strengths, 2) Weaknesses, 3) Opportunities and 4) Threats

- Strengths and threats: use your strengths to minimize threats
- Weaknesses and opportunities: improve weaknesses using opportunities
- Weaknesses and threats: work on addressing weaknesses to avoid threats

Assignment: Before conducting a situation analysis, take a retrospective of your communication activities and answer a few questions: What events in your organization over the past year impressed you? What were the negative moments when something went wrong? What have you learned during this time? What would you like to repeat in the next period? What should be done differently next time?

Section 2.4. Goals and objectives of the communication strategy

Defining the goals and objectives of a communication strategy serves as the basis for your future communication activities, sets the expectations you are going to meet, and helps you quantify the resources needed and plan communication activities. Goals and objectives should be specific and targeted.

It must be remembered that the goals of communication are always associated with changes in the lives and activities of target audiences, which can occur at the level of behaviour, skills, knowledge, policies, norms or attitudes towards a particular problem.

Communication goals are changes



Communication goals establish:

- A desired change in target audience behaviour, social norms or policies and answer the question 'What do we want?'
- Proposed changes and answer the question 'How will this change affect specific people, the community and society?'
- The time frame required for the change and answers the question 'When do we need these changes?'

The communication goal gives us an understanding of what effect we want the communications to have, through the adequate use of communication tools. There are only three effects:

- Awareness of your activity/organization
- Relationship to your activity/organization
- Intention to somehow participate in your activity/organization

The goal is always measured (in time, in quantity, in quality). Well-formulated communication goals can be measured on a **SMART** scale (**S** – Specific, **M** – Measurable, **A** – Actionable, **R** – Realistic, **T** – Time-specific / Requiring specific time).

Assignment: Check your goals for one more criterion: are they in your area of responsibility? Can you and your organization be fully responsible for achieving them? If you find that achieving a goal depend more on other organizations or people, consider reframing it.

Section 2.5. The target audience

With regard to audiences, the first thing to understand is whose support is critical to the success of the organization/project/activity. Once you understand this, you can focus your communication efforts on working with these groups.

TARGET AUDIENCE



Understanding the target audience will allow you to:

- Use the right channel to communicate with it
- Choose an effective format, genre and style of communication
- Plan and calculate communication effects and risks
- Organize appropriate promotion mechanisms

Vital to strategic communications is the question of audience segmentation. Only by understanding the characteristics of people's perceptions, motivations, attitudes and patterns of behaviour is it possible to build effective communication. One way to segment is to divide groups into primary, secondary and tertiary audiences.

The primary audience are those people whose behaviour must change in order for the project's goals to be achieved. The secondary audience are those people who have a direct impact on people from the primary group in the context of behaviour change. The tertiary audience includes those who have an impact on the whole of society, who have the status of leaders, resources that they can direct towards change, and the ability to persuade, thanks to their charisma or people's trust.

TARGET AUDIENCE SEGMENTATION



Assignment: Try to establish who the primary, secondary and tertiary audiences for your activity are. Are these audiences familiar to you and have you worked with them before?

Section 2.6. Strategic approaches in communications

Strategic communication approaches describe how the communication strategy goals will be achieved: the specific activities the communication intervention will be packaged and how these activities will be framed in a single action programme such as an information campaign or implemented on various information platforms. The key here is knowing your target audiences and their media consumption habits.

Thus, a communication strategy may include several strategic communication approaches that ensure consistency and coordination between the target group and partners, as well as the synergy of the changes being made. Strategic approaches can be planned either simultaneously or in stages.

Examples of strategic approaches include (but are not limited to):

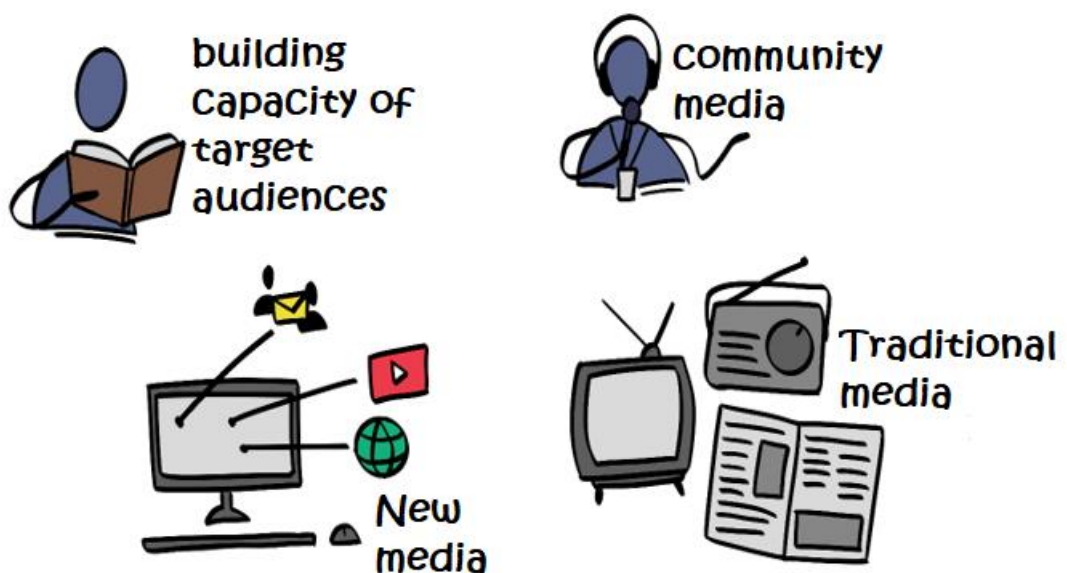
- Advocacy
- Focus on branding
- Direct contacts (meetings, interpersonal communication)
- Community mobilization
- Community media
- Traditional media
- New media (social media, instant messengers)
- Building capacity of target audiences
- Target audience training
- Consultations with target audiences
- Influencers (bloggers, vloggers, social media account owners)
- Outdoor advertising (banners, graffiti, etc.)
- Printed materials, etc.

Assignment: Select several strategic communication approaches that you think are appropriate and analyze how they fit your target audience using this table.

Table 1: Strategic approaches in communication with the target audience

Strategic approach	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages

Strategic approaches to achieve communication goals



Section 2.7. The communication plan

A **communication plan** is an action plan for implementing the communication strategy. It includes specific activities aimed at achieving its goals.

The plan's structure depends on various factors (the goals, the characteristics of the target audience, the strategic communication approaches, etc.) and may include the following sections:

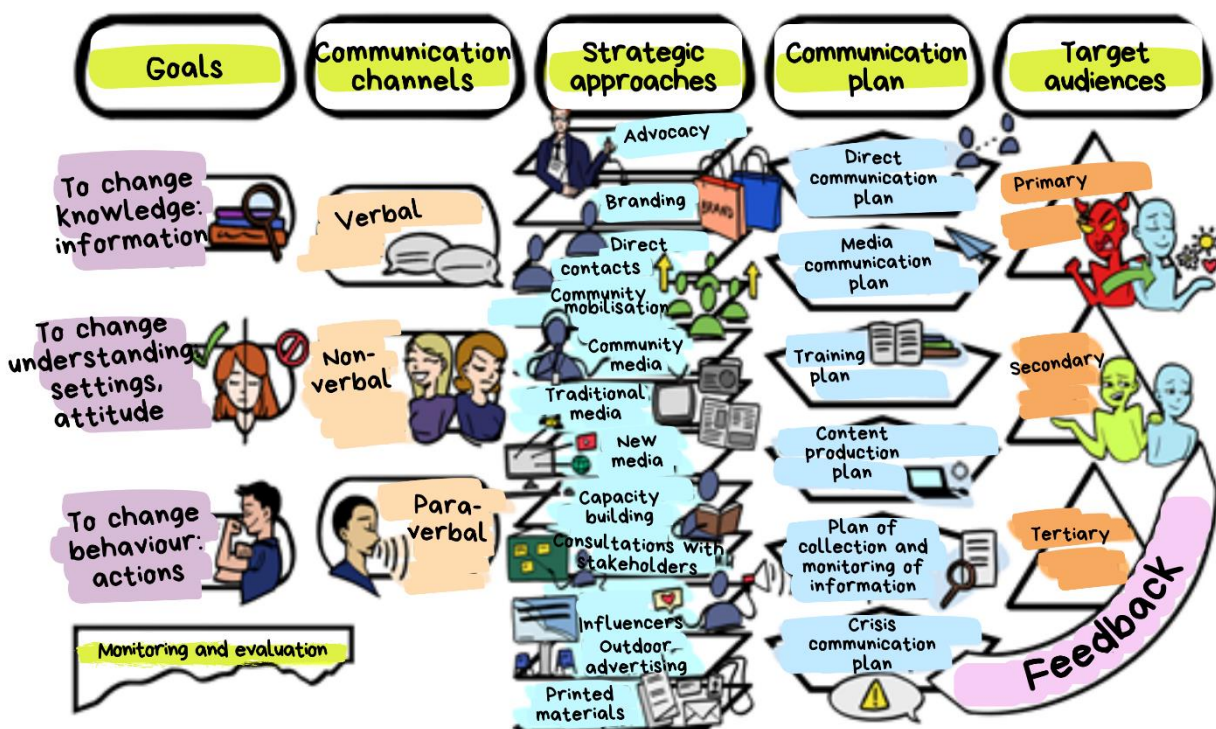
- A plan for direct communications (meetings with the public, consultations, public speaking, etc.)
- A plan for media communications (interaction with the media — press conferences, media tours, press clubs, press releases, etc.)

- A training plan (trainings, seminars, laboratories, etc.)
- A content production plan (for social media, video, audio, printed materials, outdoor advertising, etc.)
- A plan for collecting information and monitoring (activities planned to measure the effectiveness of communications — surveys, media monitoring, focus groups, etc.)
- A crisis communications plan (what can interfere with the implementation of a communication strategy and how you can avoid these risks)

Assignment: Make a list of your usual communication activities. First, determine which section of the Communications Plan structure they refer to. Next, fill out the sections of the following communication plan matrix for each activity. This will allow you to track deadlines, responsible parties and indicators of strategy implementation and to understand the goals being achieved (see Table 2).

Table 2: Communication Plan Matrix

#	Event/activity/product	Responsible party (person, organization)	Terms	Expected results (indicators)	What strategy objective is being achieved
					<i>Other comments if any (e.g. an additional budget is required, technical support, important content elements of the concept, etc.)</i>



Section 2.8. Monitoring and evaluation

To understand and evaluate how effective your communication activities are, it is important to plan monitoring and evaluation activities. Here we need an integrated approach and variability in the use of various tools.

It is recommended that the monitoring and evaluation report consist of four parts:

- Quantitative indicators (based on the implementation of the communication plan)
- Internet statistics (based on analysis of your internet resources and social media accounts)
- Results of a survey of target audiences
- Recommendations for changing and adjusting the current communication strategy execution plan

Quantitative performance results

The indicators in the Communication Plan (see the 'Expected results' column in Table 2 above) provide general information about its performance. This can be the amount of content produced, events, meetings, participants involved, etc.

Internet statistics

Your data source is your online resources. Your indicators may include the following:

- Number of site visitors
- Number of subscribers in social networks
- Availability and operation of the feedback service on the site
- Social media audience engagement indicators (comments, shares, etc.)
- Number of views on the internet
- Analysis of messages and comments on social media
- The number of times information is shared by external internet users
- The number of requests processed and transmitted through feedback channels on the site

Survey of target audiences

To evaluate the effectiveness of the communication plan's implementation, you can research the target audience to find out what they have learned, how their attitudes have changed (for example, are they satisfied or dissatisfied?) and what they have started doing differently.

There are various research methods: telephone survey, online survey and direct survey. The object of research is the primary target audience defined in the communication strategy.

Assignment: Write questions to find out how your target audience's knowledge has changed as a result of your communication activities. What questions will let you know whether their attitude towards your organization has changed?

Conclusion

The purpose of this Handbook is to help local government representatives in border areas to more effectively and systematically build communication, carry out communication activities and provide targeted information services to the population living in the areas where they work.

The guide explains the concept of 'communication and its planning' and includes detailed information on using the basic principles of communication to achieve the desired result, as well as step-by-step instructions for planning communication and information activities in order to improve personal and professional skills that contribute to effective communication.

The most important of the basic principles are:

- √ **Communication** is the exchange of information between two or more people.
- √ **Effective communication** is the ability to convey information to the recipient in order to achieve the desired result.
- √ A **communication strategy** is always a secondary strategic document. First of all, your organization/project/any activity should have a development strategy or a strategic plan or other document describing how you plan to achieve the main goals of the organization/project/activity.
- √ **Communication goals** are always associated with changes in the lives and activities of target audiences, which can occur at the level of behaviour, skills, knowledge, policies, norms or attitudes towards a particular problem.
- √ **A target audience** is a group of people whose behaviour should be changed in order to achieve the project goals: people with a direct impact on people from the primary group in the context of behaviour change and those with an impact on the whole of society, who have the status of leaders, resources they can direct to change, and the ability to persuade through their charisma or people's trust.
- √ **Strategic approaches in the communication strategy** are approaches that ensure the consistency of efforts and coordination between the target group and partners, as well as the synergy of ongoing changes.
- √ **A communication plan** is an action plan for implementing the communication strategy. It includes specific activities aimed at achieving its goals.

The project team and experts have developed this Handbook in the hope that it will become a reference book for local authorities to strengthen cross-border cooperation and consistently improve living conditions in border areas through local economic development with a focus on human rights, gender equality and vulnerable groups. However, the most important goal of developing this document will be the contribution of the workshop participants, as well as all those working in local government to supporting cross-border cooperation and improving of living conditions for people in the border regions of Central Asia.

Additional resources

Terminology

The handbooks below explain the correct terminology in the field of migration, which is important for local authorities operating in border areas prone to migration processes

Reporting Migration: A Handbook on migration reporting for journalists, ICMPD 2020. Available at:

<https://www.icmpd.org/file/download/50559/file/Handbook0on0Reporting0Migration0EN.pdf>

Handbook on migration terminology, IOM 2011. Available at:

https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/handbook_on_migration_terminology.pdf

BORDER MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME IN CENTRAL ASIA

Regional Office in Central Asia
Business Centre 79
Office 1003
79 Isanov St
Bishkek, 720001
Kyrgyz Republic

Tel.: +996 312 97 50 91
bomca@icmpd.org

www.bomca-eu.org

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