Conservation Strategies:

Awareness & Communications

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Contents

This document is intended as a guidance resource to support the implementation of the *WWF Standards of Conservation Project and Programme Management.* Although each step in these *Standards* must be completed, the level of detail depends on the circumstances of individual projects and programmes. Accordingly, each team will have to decide whether and to what level of detail they want to apply the guidance in this document.

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https://intranet.panda.org/documents/folder.cfm?uFolderID=77127.

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Conservation Strategies:
Awareness and Communications

What is an Awareness and Communications Strategy?

In the context of project management, awareness and communications is a way to influence people's knowledge and attitudes and, hence, the actions that they take. Given the integral role humans play in conserving biodiversity, an awareness and communications strategy can offer a powerful means to help project teams achieve their conservation goals. As outlined in the IUCN-CMP Taxonomy of Conservation Actions, there are three types of strategies that fall under the broad heading of Education and Awareness:

- Formal Education: Enhancing knowledge and skills of students in a formal degree program. This includes, for example, education that takes place in grade school and high school, universities, and technical colleges.
- Training: Enhancing knowledge, skills and information exchange for practitioners, stakeholders, and other relevant individuals in structured settings outside of degree programs. This could include hosting a training course on protected area management and design or a monitoring and evaluation workshop, developing how-to manuals on project budgeting, or helping local community members develop income generation activities.
- Awareness & Communications: Raising environmental awareness and providing information through various media or through civil disobedience. This might include a radio campaign to discourage the trafficking of wildlife skins and furs, visits with school children to inform them of the benefits of forests, or organized marches to protest plans to build a dam.

Although there is some conceptual overlap in these strategies, this document will focus only on awareness and communications.

When Is It Useful to Use an Awareness and Communications Strategy?

Awareness and communications strategies are designed to influence people's knowledge, attitudes, and actions. As such, an awareness and communications strategy can be important when a project team identifies lack of knowledge, lack of awareness, or unfavorable attitudes as indirect threats (note: they can also be opportunities) affecting their conservation targets (see Step 1.4 Situation Analysis). In determining whether to use this strategy, it will be important to consider the extent to which the lack of knowledge and awareness or unfavorable attitudes are contributing to the overall threat. If their contribution is minor, it may not make sense to use an awareness and communications strategy. This is the case even if your office or team is particularly skilled at awareness raising.

In terms of the WWF Standards for Conservation Project and Programme Management, project teams develop their strategies in Step 2.1 Action Plan. If your team determines that it needs to influence knowledge, attitudes, and/or actions, it may choose at this point to develop an awareness and communications strategy.

How to Develop an Awareness and Communications Strategy

Developing an awareness and communications strategy involves specifying clearly-defined and measurable

communications objectives and developing a set of coordinated messages, activities, tools and products that you will use to achieve them. The general process for developing an awareness and communications strategy includes the following steps, some of which you may have already covered in similar steps needed for implementing the WWF Standards for Project and Programme Management:

1) Understand the **context** or background in which you will implement your awareness and communications strategy;
2) Identify the **target audience** for your awareness and communications strategy;
3) Identify your desired awareness and communications **objectives**;
4) Define the **key message** you want to communicate and a **call to action** to inspire your target audience;
5) Choose **activities** and **tools** to help you deliver your key message and call to action; and
6) **Monitor** and **evaluate** the effectiveness of your message.

For your awareness and communications strategy to be most effective, it is important to have a communications specialist (or someone with relevant communications experience) as a member of the project team or assigned to support the team. Where this is not possible, it may be necessary to seek external support.

In this document we guide you through the steps listed above. As you go through these steps, you may find it useful to organize your information in a matrix form. Figure 1 provides an example that you could use or adapt to suit your needs.

Figure 1. Communications Matrix

Awareness and Communications Strategy:				
Communications Objective 1				
Target audiences	**Key message**	**Call to Action**	**Activities**	**Tools**
Communications Objective 2				
Target audiences	**Key message**	**Call to Action**	**Activities**	**Tools**

1. Understand the Context

Every awareness and communications act takes place in a complex environment of circumstances and people with their own opinions, history, education, cultures and interests. Communication is therefore not only a matter of getting your message to the right target audiences, but also anticipating all the circumstances and actors that might respond to your actions – positively, neutrally or negatively. To be prepared for all kind of reactions and counteractions, your awareness and communications strategy should

draw on the situation and stakeholder analyses you develop in [Step 1.4 Context and Stakeholders](#) of the WWF Standards. You may find it helpful to use additional tools that can help you focus your awareness and communication efforts. Here we highlight a few of those tools.

SWOT Analysis

A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis can help you determine how well positioned your team is and what risks you need to keep in mind as you develop your awareness and communications strategy. A simple example is provided in Box 1.

Box 1. SWOT Analysis Example for Communications

Situation:
Fish stocks are dwindling in the project area. From a conservation perspective, this is a threat because it means over-fishing is depleting the biodiversity target in the project area. For communications, it may be an opportunity because we can use this information to convince the fishermen to switch to sustainable fishing methods.

SWOT Analysis:

Strengths (Internal)	Weaknesses (Internal)
• Technical experts on team • International recognition and respect for knowledge on fisheries issues • Access to international network • Good relationship with partners	• Poor internal communications • Knowledge missing on social and economic developments/aspects • Incomplete knowledge on buyers market • Not a good relationship with regional press • Hardly any field (community) work by WWF
Opportunities (External)	**Threats (External)**
• Widespread political awareness on need for switching to sustainable fishing techniques; governments are ready to change • Strong network government, NGOs and research institutes in place • Fishermen can see that resources are dwindling	• Illegal fishermen from outside the area hard to reach • The environment is not a priority for poor people • Poor media development in the area. Media expects WWF to pay for cameras, trips • Low education level in stakeholder communities

From this SWOT-matrix the project team can conclude it has good technical knowledge and is respected for it, probably by government and research institutes. At the same time, it is deficient in it knowledge of socio economic issues, and it probably does not have much contact with the local communities. In addition, it is hard to reach out to them because the media structure is limited. As such, this project carries the risk that it will become too technical, too focused on government and research, and too removed from the communities and fishermen.

However, there is an important opportunity in that local fishermen are noticing that their resources are dwindling. This provides a good basis to communicate with this target audience, in spite of the challenges to make them aware of the problem and to encourage them to change behavior.

It is obvious that this project has to address its deficiencies in terms of socio economic knowledge and internal communications before proceeding. Communications activities will only be effective if these issues are addressed first. This has implications for the awareness and communications strategies and perhaps also the team membership.

Stakeholder and/or Actor Analysis

Another tool that might help you develop your awareness and communications strategy is the stakeholder analysis you developed in Step 1.4 (see Basic Guidance on Stakeholder Analysis). Depending upon your situation, you may want to think about other actors that did not emerge directly in your stakeholder analysis but that will be important for your awareness and communications strategy (e.g., the media). These actors and stakeholders are those persons, groups or organisations that can (directly or indirectly) influence the achievement of conservation (or communications) goals and whose participation and support are crucial to its success. Some practitioners may consider actors to be synonymous with stakeholders; strictly speaking they may be different in that some actors (such as the media) may not have a vested interest in the achievement of the project goals, and some stakeholders may not be influential (i.e. weak stakeholders). The more you know about the stakeholders and actors, the better you can decide whether they will become a target audience. You should consider his or her:

- Influence on the project (positive or negative, direct or indirect power);
- Level of knowledge and problem awareness (e.g. how many fishermen know and accept that dynamite fishing destroys coral reefs and fish populations?); and
- Willingness to co-operate (e.g., what is in it for them, and what is their attitude towards WWF and the project?)

Communications History

Finally, a helpful process to understand the context for developing your awareness and communications strategy is to take stock of what your team or other WWF teams have already communicated and what relationships you or others have built up with the actors/target groups. It is important to get an overview of the tools WWF has produced and the activities and strategies used in the past. What has been accomplished so far from a communications point of view? How effective have previous communications been? Documenting this information is a helpful step to ensure your team is taking learning and due diligence into account. In addition, as you implement and evaluate your own awareness and communications strategy, you should keep track of this type of information so that you can share it with others using similar strategies in the future (for more information, see Step 5.1 Share Lessons Learned and Good Practices).

2. Identify the Target Audiences for Your Awareness and Communications Strategy

Now that you understand the context for your awareness and communications strategy, you should think about whom you want to influence with your strategy. First and foremost, you need to keep in mind whose behaviors you are trying to change with your awareness and communications strategy. These are the people that should be in your target audience. Sometimes this audience will be very specific (e.g., fishers working in your project site), and sometimes they will be much broader (e.g., consumers of shark fin soup in China). As discussed later, this will influence the communications tools and activities that will be most appropriate for your situation.

You should also use the actor analysis to select your target audiences. Not all actors, however, will become target audiences for awareness and communications strategies. In some cases, it will not be effective to direct communications at certain actors (e.g., if you cannot reach actors or if they are not likely to change behavior). In those situations, it may be better to either not try to reach them or to select other actors that

can function as intermediaries for reaching them.

You also need to look at the actor analysis to decide whether your messages will be received by other, unplanned, actors and what the effect of these messages may be on them. If it is a positive or neutral side effect, you probably do not have to worry. If the effect might be negative (e.g. actor may feel left out and can have a strong negative influence on the projects or other important actors), you should include these actors as target audiences in your awareness and communications strategy.

You may have two types of audiences for your strategy:
- *Primary Target Audience*: The key persons or groups to whom you communicate directly. You may have more than one primary target audience for your awareness and communications strategy.
- *Secondary Target Audience*: People or groups who are less relevant to your efforts but whom you wish to receive the communications messages because they will also benefit from hearing the messages or because they can influence your target audience now or in the future.

When identifying your target audience, be as specific as possible and try to describe your audience in terms of current behavior, level of knowledge and awareness, preferred methods of receiving information and motivations/barriers to accepting the information. The more refined the target audience description, the more precise and effective your communications will be. Broad descriptions like the 'general public' are less likely to lead to a successful awareness and communications strategy than a tightly defined target audience.

3. Identify Your Awareness and Communications Objectives

For any strategy, you should document your assumptions about how you believe that strategy will help you affect your biodiversity target. A results chain is one useful tool for doing this, but you may have others. By documenting these assumptions, you will set the stage for developing objectives and, eventually, indicators. Generally, awareness and communications strategies seek to influence individuals' knowledge, attitudes, and behavior. Often, however, it will often be necessary to use other strategies to help achieve the desired behavior change. Figure 2 provides an example of a results chain for a strategy designed to raise awareness about the importance of sharks and the effects of shark fishing for shark fin soup.

Figure 2. Example Results Chain for an Awareness Raising Campaign
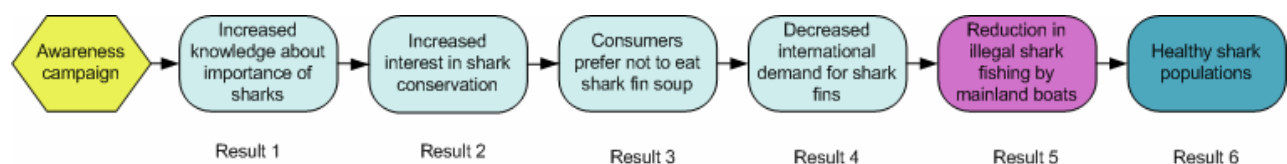
As discussed in Step 2.1 Action Plan, a good objective should meet the following criteria:
- **Outcome Oriented:** Represents necessary changes in critical factors that affect one or more project goals
- **Measurable:** Definable in relation to some standard scale (numbers, percentage, fractions, or all/nothing states)
- **Time Limited:** Achievable within a specific period of time

- **Specific:** Clearly defined so that all people involved in the project have the same understanding of what the terms in the objective mean
- **Practical:** Achievable and appropriate within the context of the project site

Building off of the results chain in Figure 2, you might determine that it's necessary to have objectives for results 1, 4, and 5.[1] These objectives might be:

Result 1: Increased knowledge about importance of sharks
Objective 1: By the end of 2008, at least 50% of the target audience can cite 2 or more ways in which sharks contribute to a healthy marine ecosystem.

Result 4: Decreased international demand for shark fins
Objective 4: By 2012, the number of kilograms of shark fins exported to international markets decreases by at least 25%, as compared to 2007 levels.

Result 5: Reduction in illegal shark fishing by mainland boats
Objective 5: By 2015, the number of citations issued monthly to mainland boats for illegal shark fishing decreases to 10 or fewer.

Objective 1 is a direct, immediate result of your awareness and communications strategy, whereas Objectives 4 and 5 are longer-term results that you hope your awareness and communications strategy – possibly in combination with other strategies – will achieve. In effect, they are the changes in behavior you need to see for there to be an improvement in your biodiversity target. For more information on how to develop objectives and examples of well-defined and poorly-defined objectives, see Step 2.1 Action Plan. See also Basic Guidance on Results Chains.

4. Defining the Key Message and Call to Action

After you have selected your target audiences and defined your objectives related to your awareness and communications strategy, you need to think about *what* you will say – your key message – to increase your target audience's knowledge, influence their attitudes, or affect their behaviors.

The **Key Message** sums up what you want to convey in a short memorable statement. A key message should include a benefit for your target audience so that they are willing to alter their behavior. A good check for your key message is to picture the target audience right in front of you. They tell you: *"You have 10 seconds to tell us why we should do it and what's in it for me*." They will only stay and listen if there is a benefit for them and if your message is compact and clear.

If you cannot formulate a good key message, with a benefit for your target audience, it is a signal to take a closer look at whether you have chosen a realistic awareness and communications strategy or the right target audience. The following are some examples of benefits that could encourage your target audience to change behavior:

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[1] Note: Result 6 would require a goal because it is a result for a biodiversity target. You will have already set your goals in Step 2.1 Action Plan of the WWF Standards.

Governments could be willing to change policy or regulations because:

- It will save resources for the future
- It can help the economic situation
- It makes them look good on an international level
- It gives them credit with local communities

Local communities may change behavior because:

- It will save their resources (and food) for future
- It will create opportunities for new sources of income
- They are proud of their environment
- It will protect them from damage and danger

A **Call to Action** describes in a few words exactly what you want your target audience to do. It gives your audience specific advice or alternatives. It should not merely suggest that the audience refrain from some type of behavior – it should tell them what they should do instead. See Box 2 for an example of a key message and some calls to action. Also, for more examples of "on-brand" key messages by target audience, see the [Key Messages from Brand Guidelines](#):

Box 2. Example Key Message and Calls to Action

Situation:
As described in Box 1, fish stocks are dwindling in the project area due to overfishing. Local fishermen are noticing that their resources are dwindling, so the project team sees a good opportunity to communicate with this target audience and encourage them to change behavior.

Key Message and Calls to Action:
Key Message: Overfishing is bad for the environment. Help stop overfishing.
Is this a good message? No, it is not clear how the target audience benefits from stopping overfishing.

Better Key Message: Over-fishing results in insufficient catch in the future. By helping to stop overfishing, you protect your future income and continue to provide food for your families.

Call to Action: Adopt sustainable fishing methods

Some Other Examples of Good Calls to Action:
- Stop illegal logging and switch to FSC wood products.
- Help stop overfishing by writing your government and letting them know your concerns.

Note: The Calls to Action give your audience specific advice or alternatives. They do not suggest simply stopping something – they tell the audience what they should do instead.

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5. Choose Activities and Tools to Help You Deliver Your Key Message and Call to Action

Now you have thought about *what* you are going to tell to your target audiences, the next step is to decide on *how* you are going to reach out to them. What activities and tools will you choose to deliver your message? Your choice will depend on what you want to achieve, the message you want to communicate, and the profile of your target audience.

- **Communications Activities** are how you use communications channels to pass your message to the outside world (e.g., TV-campaign, Internet campaign, celebration event around new certification, press conference, visits to key companies, and workshops on FSC forest management).
- **Communications Tools** are the communication materials you produce – often cost items (e.g., leaflet, brochure, presentation, press release, banner, testimonial and showcase, educational booklet, and ad).

Box 3. Example Approaches, Activities, and Tools for Delivering Key Messages and Calls to Action

Situation:
After years of working with the government a new marine protected area is gazetted. After this gazettement the fishermen are no longer allowed to fish with the trawlers they used to use. The fishermens' wives begin a strong anti-WWF campaign using the very strong message: WWF starves people. The message is all over the news and your image is seriously damaged.

Approach 1: Fight Back
Communications Activities:
- Attack the women in a media offensive saying they talk nonsense, it's just for the money, MPAs are good for the environment and for future generations, they should know better.
- Look for others to back up your story
Communications Tools:
- Press releases
- Flyers to give to people
- Internet actions

Approach 2: Be Very Quiet
Communications Activities:
- None (It's better to sit still when someone is shaving your head)
Communications Tools:
- Q&A and reactive statements in case the press calls

Approach 3: Work Face to Face with Women
Communications Activities:
- Face-to-face meetings with small groups of women (Don't go public, but try to talk to them to convince them)
- Guided field visit to MPA with women to explain ecosystem and effects of unsustainable fishing
Communications Tools:
- Leaflets for the women
- Reports on benefits of MPAs (from a source THEY trust)

Approach 4: Repair Your Image
Communications Activities:
- Non-contradictive activities to show you are the good guy: a children's campaign that educates youth, a theatre play in fishermen's villages that explains MPAs in a friendly manner
- Debate about alternative income strategies and let fishermen take active part
Communications Tools:
- Campaign materials for the children's campaign (Internet, event, contest materials, etc.)
- Report on alternative incomes in marine areas
- Press release about event, campaign, and debates

Which activities and tools you choose will often depend upon what approach you want to take with your awareness and communications strategy (see Box 3). Every choice will have a different result. It is up to you and your project team to decide which approach, activities, and tools will be most effective in helping you achieve awareness and communications objectives that will bring you closer to achieving your conservation goal. When working with an organization like WWF, you may find that you are sometimes using communications as a tool to respond to what is happening in your environment. In such a case, you may not have chosen awareness and communications as one of your project's strategies, but you will have to use it to react to developments in the course of the project. Box 3 provides an example of such a situation. For more information on choosing the right channel and media, see the publishing guidelines. For a summary list of activities and tools, their benefits and the challenges involved, see 5-2 Formal Communications Products, Annex 1.

Various communication tools are effective for different purposes. Annex 1 provides a list of communications activities and tools and their common uses. This annex should not be used as a substitute for developing an overall strategy, but it can help you explore and select appropriate activities and tools.

As you develop your awareness and communications strategy, you should also look around to see what your office, other partners, national WWF offices, and the wider network are doing in this area. It is important to look outside your team to make sure that your messages are coordinated, consistent, and timed appropriately.

Prior to implementing your awareness and communications strategy, you should think about pre-testing your messages, activities, and tools for specific target audiences. This is particularly useful if you do not have experience with a specific target audience or if you are not sure your message, activities, and/or tools will be understood or effective for achieving your communications objectives. Often, communications departments will pre-test advertisements, mailings, and other mass media messages on a representative sample of the target audience. Pre-testing can also be done more simply and on a smaller scale, just by inviting or visiting some persons from your target audience, showing them your tools and discussing the message with them. By doing this, your project can avoid mistakes and unexpected effects from communications.

## 6. Monitor and Evaluate the Effectiveness of Your Message

As with all strategies your project team implements, it is important to monitor and evaluate the extent to which your strategy is contributing to your conservation objectives and goals. For an awareness and communications strategy, you need to examine to what degree your message has had the intended impact. Looking back at the example results chain in Figure 2 (also copied on the following page), this team would need to determine whether its strategy:

- Increased knowledge about the importance of sharks;
- Increased interest in shark conservation;
- Influenced consumer preference for shark fin soup;
- Decreased international demand for shark fins;
- Reduced illegal shark fishing by mainland boats; and

- Improved the health of shark populations at its site.

Obviously, the earlier results will be more directly linked to the awareness and communications strategy, whereas the later results are what one hopes/assumes will follow from the achievement of these early results. You should develop indicators associated with each of your key results and monitor them as you implement your strategy (for more information, see Step 2.2 Monitoring Plan and Basic Guidance on Results Chains). If you used a results chain, this will help you identify the indicators you should be monitoring (see Figure 3). You may not necessarily have the resources to monitor all of these indicators, but the results chain will at least give you a framework for determining what indicators you should ideally monitor.

Figure 3. Potential Indicators for Example Awareness and Communications Strategy
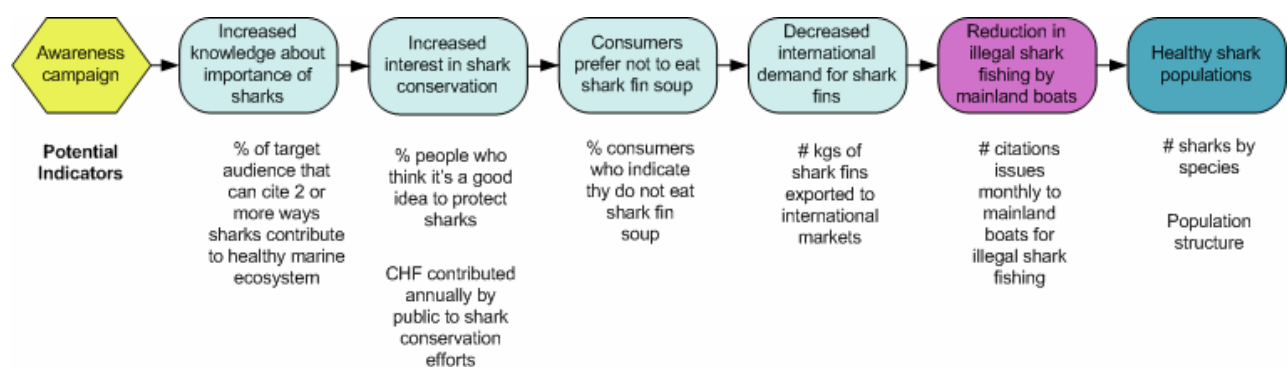
If your awareness and communications strategies are not contributing to the results you expected to achieve, you may need to rethink your assumptions and adapt your strategy. Some questions that might help you adapt your strategy include:
- Did you reach the right audience?
- Did you use the right message?
- Did your audience understand the message?
- Were the communications tools you used appropriate?
- Might another awareness and communications approach have been more effective? If so, which approach and how should it have been used?
- Are there other factors at your site that are influencing the degree to which your strategy can be effective? If so, should you be implementing other strategies in addition to or instead of your awareness and communications strategy?

Other Steps to Keep in Mind

Your awareness and communications strategy is just one strategy among a suite of strategies your project team is implementing. You should be using the WWF Standards for planning your overall project – including all aspects related to your awareness and communications strategy. As such, you should make sure that you integrate your communications activities into your action plan, work plan, operational plan, and monitoring plan (see Step 2.1 and Step 3 of the WWF Standards). This includes, but is not limited to thinking about the specific activities and tasks you will need to undertake, who will be responsible for implementing them, how much will they cost, and how long will they take.

Being on Brand

In addition to thinking about how to develop and implement your awareness and communications strategy, you also need to make sure you are careful about how you represent WWF. The WWF logo is one of the most recognized in the world. To make people really understand WWF's core purpose – saving nature with people, people living in harmony with the natural world – it is important to properly position WWF every time you communicate to any audience. Just like a person, your tone of voice can be formal, casual, persuasive, or passionate, but your message should always sound like it is coming from the same organization. People who click on our websites, read our reports, and see WWF folders and advertisements should have no doubt that everything comes from one global organization. Therefore presenting WWF's brand correctly is crucial. This means being consistent with the logo, slogan (For a living planet), typefaces, colors, and "on-brand" with your key messages and the way WWF uses words and images on all applications. All this will combine to communicate the sort of organization WWF is – active, passionate, and solutions-oriented.

When implementing communications activities and tools, follow this simple checklist and ask yourself:
- Is my message **passionate**? Does it really show my enthusiasm?
- Is it **optimistic**? Is it positive and forward looking?
- Is it **inspirational**? Will it move someone to take action?
- Does it **challenge**? Does it confront the issues?
- Is it **credible**? Will people believe me?
- Is it **accountable**? Does it demonstrate our honesty and trustworthiness?
- Is it **persevering**? Does it prove our commitment?
- Is it **delivering results**? Does it show what we have achieved?

When producing tools, also look at the Brand Guidelines on Connect for the use of logo, slogan, typefaces, visuals, and colours.

References and Links

Methodological guide for Designing and Implementing a Multimedia Communication Strategy
FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) guiding document focused on communications for sustainable development in developing countries.

Media Relations 101
Clear website with all aspects one should take into account while developing press or media relations. Examples are Texas-focused.

WWF College
Via WWF College you can follow on line learning modules on Communications, Campaigning and Advocacy & Lobbying. For information contact WWF College (college@wwf.nl) or look at Connect.

WWF Connect

- Tips and Guidelines on [Press Relations](#) (e.g. writing press releases, organizing press conferences, press trips)
- Tips and Guidelines on Developing [Websites](#) and Internet Campaigns
- Step-by-Step Guide to [Publishing In Print or Online](#)
- [WWF-Brand Guidelines](#)
- Communications Activities and Tools, [5-2 Formal Communications Products, Annex 1](#).