

# RCE Communications Toolkit

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## Why implement an RCE communications strategy?

A sound communications strategy will enhance the overall success of PSI platforms by strengthening relations with partners, donors, host governments and the general public that we serve. Not only will it help build PSI's image in the communities where we work, it will also help to generate greater interest and demand for our work, helping us achieve our overarching health impact goals.

We all have a vested interest in telling the PSI story and telling it well. Putting together a communications plan might take a bit of extra time and effort, but the payoff of being able to communicate our messages effectively to our target audiences is well worth it.

## Putting a communications plan together

### Defining the goal

The first step in developing a communications plan is to clearly define its goal: What do you want to achieve through your communications strategy?

#### *Example 1:*

Despite being made up of a broad range of stakeholders RCE Abc is understood by the general public to be only a local university effort. The goal of RCE Abc's communications strategy is to build greater understanding among the general public about the diverse stakeholders who make up the RCE and their broad

range of education for sustainable development activities.

*Example 2:*

RCE Xyz needs to raise money in order to implement some key activities. For this reason their communications goal must support its fundraising objective. One successful way to do this is by raising its visibility among current and potential donors as an effective partner and beneficiary.

### Targeting the audience

Once you have defined your overall goal, the next step is to focus on your target audience based on this goal. A communications plan must be able to focus specifically on the target audience in order to successfully reach it with your key messages.

*Example 1:* Interested in reaching the general public, RCE Abc recognizes that its target audience may not have received a high level of formal education and may have a moderate to low income. The general public audience includes the heads of families, community leaders, youth organizers and consumers.

*Example 2:* With the goal of supporting its fundraising objective, RCE Xyz needs to focus its communications efforts on current and potential donors rather than the general public. This audience would likely be educated and include professionals, policymakers, and other key community leaders.

### Refining your Message

Once you know the audience you want to reach, you need to know what you're going to say. Developing a few key messages that are easily understood by your audience will be the basis for all external communications and will help ensure consistency across your communications materials.

*Examples of General ESD Messaging:*

1. Education for sustainable development gives people the knowledge, information and tools they need to create a sustainable future for all.
2. Education for sustainable development is focused on inclusivity and equality. No matter who you are, where you're from or how much you earn, we want you to have the same opportunity as anyone else to live a healthy, happy life.
3. Innovation is at the core of education for sustainable development initiatives.
4. Education for sustainable development doesn't belong to one single sector of society – it transcends all boundaries.

### Taking it a Step Further: Media Coverage

Media are a powerful tool for conveying messages to your key audiences. The media you target will be defined by the audience you're trying to reach. A well-informed audience might be reading the daily newspapers, other high-level print publications and be monitoring specific niche outlets, such as trade magazines or donor publications.

The general public might not be as interested in those types of outlets and may be more easily reached through radio, television or through information shared at community centres and other local gathering spots.

The types of media available and the audiences they target will vary greatly from one country to another and a bit of research to ensure you're reaching the right audiences will serve you well as your communications plan progresses.

### **Telling your Story through the Media**

The bulk of your ongoing communications strategy will be coming up with ideas to get your targeted media outlets to cover your story and communicate your key messages to your key audiences. In today's media market, having a good story to tell isn't always enough. Finding placement in your target media can often be more difficult and requires creative thinking to ensure coverage.

As part of your thinking, it is important to keep in mind a few key steps:

#### **1. Barrier Identification:**

Consider the possible barriers that may block understanding of your key messages. These may include:

- Cultural barriers
- Differences in styles of communication
- Different expectations
- Different perspectives
- Communication channel barriers

#### **2. Selecting Communication Channels**

In order to help overcome identified barriers, it will be important to pick a communication channel (for a particular audience, programme or events) that will most effectively communicate your messages. These channels may include:

- Drama/Film shows
- Radio/TV programmes
- Brochure/pamphlet/newspaper/editorials/billboards
- Festivals and other festivities
- Schools debates/Quiz
- Social media

More information on some of these opportunities is described below.

#### **3. Skill formulation**

Communication skills are tools used to remove barriers to effective communications. Consider inviting a communications expert to your RCE to help develop the communications capacity of RCE partners and members.

Below, are a few specific ideas on how to garner media coverage of your work.

1. Press releases: A press release is one of the easiest and most cost-effective ways to communicate your message, however, no press release will be successful if it does not include a newsworthy piece of information. Press releases are often distributed through mass emails to your contact list or through wire services, which are agencies that distribute releases to all the

major news outlets for a fee. You can find a guide for writing a press release with all the required elements in *Appendix I*.

2. Press conferences: A press conference might be time-consuming to organize but has the potential to draw a great deal of media interest. They are most successful when they are combined with a campaign launch, new statistics or information (such as the release of research findings or a new report), or when they provide the media with access to a person or personality they wouldn't usually be able to access.
3. A celebrity visit to your program: One way to generate interest in your program or platform is to leverage the celebrity of a well-known personality. National and international celebrities are able to draw a great deal of media attention to your work, with less effort than many other public relations efforts.
4. Capitalizing on a major event in the news: It can often be hard to convince the media to cover health stories when there are so many other stories battling for limited space. Nevertheless, there will be times throughout the year when the media will be looking specifically for stories in the health areas in which you work – e.g. World Water Day or World Environment Day. At other times, a particular education or sustainability issue may make headlines because of a national or international incident that brings the topic into the news. You should be prepared to proactively suggest stories to the media around those times.
5. Hold an event: Organizing a major event, such as a football tournament, a concert, or a national contest, is also a good way to draw attention to your work. This can often be a time-consuming process but if you are able to partner with other organizations to produce a large-scale event, you will be able to garner significant media attention for your work.

Bear in mind that your overall communications goals should be the foundation for whatever event or activity you organize to draw the media. If your pitch, press release or other press event isn't focused on the needs and interests of your target media outlets, you won't successfully be able to communicate your key messaging to your target audiences.

## Telling your Story through other Avenues

As a member of the RCE network, you have access to a series of United Nations publications through which you can share your stories. These include:

1. The UNU-IAS monthly RCE Bulletin:  
An electronic monthly bulletin with news of RCE activities and upcoming events is published and disseminated to the RCE network, ESD experts and peer organizations.  
RCEs are encouraged to send in news of their activities and events or any other ESD information that may be useful to the network for use in the bulletin to the Global RCE Service Centre ([rceservicecentre@ias.unu.edu](mailto:rceservicecentre@ias.unu.edu)).
2. The UNU-IAS ESD website:  
The UNU-IAS website has an entire section dedicated to the ESD movement, including the RCE network (<http://www.ias.unu.edu/efsd>). It provides a broad

- overview of the RCE initiative, links to relevant documents, ESD and RCE-related news, as well as individual pages on each RCE. RCEs are requested to contribute information on their goals, objectives, activities and achievements regularly in order to keep their web pages current. Information for web updates may be sent to the Global RCE Service Centre ([rceservicecentre@ias.unu.edu](mailto:rceservicecentre@ias.unu.edu))
3. The RCE web portal:  
The RCE network has its own dedicated website where RCE members can share information, news and exchange ideas and debate ([www.rce-network.org](http://www.rce-network.org)). This is also where RCEs can search RCE annual reports and upload their own project information. While anyone can view the website, only RCE members with login information can search for documents and post comments to discussion forums. Please email the Global RCE Service Centre ([rceservicecentre@ias.unu.edu](mailto:rceservicecentre@ias.unu.edu)) if you would like login access to the site.

### Available Communications Materials

As an RCE member, you may also request promotional materials to help you spread the word about your RCE and the global RCE network. These include:

1. The RCE Brochure:  
English:  
[http://www.ias.unu.edu/resource\\_centre/RCE%20Brochure%20May%202012%20en%20PrintReady%20lowres.pdf](http://www.ias.unu.edu/resource_centre/RCE%20Brochure%20May%202012%20en%20PrintReady%20lowres.pdf)  
French:  
[http://www.ias.unu.edu/resource\\_centre/UNU\\_IAS\\_RCEBrochure\\_French\\_1.pdf](http://www.ias.unu.edu/resource_centre/UNU_IAS_RCEBrochure_French_1.pdf)  
Japanese: [http://www.ias.unu.edu/resource\\_centre/RCE\\_brochure\\_JP.pdf](http://www.ias.unu.edu/resource_centre/RCE_brochure_JP.pdf)  
Spanish:  
[http://www.ias.unu.edu/resource\\_centre/Spanish%20RCE%20Brochure\\_Top.pdf](http://www.ias.unu.edu/resource_centre/Spanish%20RCE%20Brochure_Top.pdf)
2. RCE Factsheets:  
Visit [http://www.ias.unu.edu/sub\\_page.aspx?catID=108&ddlID=186](http://www.ias.unu.edu/sub_page.aspx?catID=108&ddlID=186) for more information.
3. The RCE Poster featuring the map of RCEs around the world:  
[http://www.ias.unu.edu/resource\\_centre/RCE\\_world\\_map\\_poster%20May%202013.pdf](http://www.ias.unu.edu/resource_centre/RCE_world_map_poster%20May%202013.pdf)
4. Various RCE books and other publications:  
Visit [http://www.ias.unu.edu/sub\\_page.aspx?catID=108&ddlID=186](http://www.ias.unu.edu/sub_page.aspx?catID=108&ddlID=186) for more information.

### Important Thoughts on Communications from the RCE Global Network

*During the assessment and knowledge of an RCE, a media house and a university are the only compulsory institution necessary to be in the list of organizations synergized to deliver ESD before an acknowledgement was/is granted. but not a single media that is a member of any RCE cover its RCE activity during any of the global conferences. That shows that our media institutions are underutilized as members or stakeholders. A local media covering a global event and broadcasting it back home will surely boost the morale of the stakeholders, attract the attention of the policy makers and win the interest of most of the viewers. More still, it will sensitize the local communities expose the work of the local RCEs.*

*Again, during the global conferences, International medias should be invited to cover all our events of most of them and future broadcast them even in parts. They have reports all over them the world and am sure their local reports can do the magic. So also all local events by all local RCEs should involve the media. An office of the Public Relation Officer, may strongly be recommended to all RCEs and the PRO may be a journalist as priority.*

*Lastly social media forum should be created for the RCEs, this may attract many outside the RCE community and through which we may induce them with sustainability. This is because social media forum are today the demand of the time and the in thing in terms of socialization and events fast tracking radars.*

*- Ali Bukhar Ahmad, RCE Kano (Nigeria)*

## **Communications Case Studies and Examples from across the RCE Global Network**