

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN FOR MALI



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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The following is a summary of the proposed communications output for the activities under Objective 3 of the ACCCA project, which calls for the identification of communications materials that allow the pilot communities to achieve the maximum benefit from the use of the Water Evaluation and Planning (WEAP) system deployed as part of the NCAP project.

This report highlights some of key technical issues that were considered in the design of a work plan that will be implemented to translate the results of the technical models to the communities, placing climate adaptation in the context of existing stresses and within the realm of planning responses.

PRINCIPLES OF THE STRATEGY

Communication is about more than delivering a message using specific techniques. It is about setting a process in motion that will encourage learning and the exchange of information, perhaps even change the perceptions and behaviors of the target audience. Understanding this basic precept places a significant emphasis on the development of an effective communications plan, which will follow several stages, and will guide the design of the translation activities. These were identified in consultations within the ACCCA Team, and a field visit to the community of Massabla during March of 2008. Feedback at all stages of the campaign ensures the message and the channels of communication are compatible with user needs.

Phase 1: Planning - understanding the audience, defining the objectives for the communications strategy, encouraging effective two-way communication.

Phase 2: Message and Materials Development – translating key findings comparison, checking and applying informed judgment to competing or absent information. Generating materials for dissemination.

Phase 3: Pre-testing – using focus groups and other strategies to see if the objectives of the communication strategy are clearly communicated.

Phase 4: Implementation - Disseminating the materials and information through desired channels (e.g. video, posters, papers, etc.)

Phase 5: Evaluation - monitoring the impact of the strategy.

CONSIDERATIONS

Four essential themes were considered with respect to the design of a communications strategy, all of which center around the notion that communication is about more than the simple delivery of a message. Particularly in the case of adaptation planning and translating technical model output, it requires:

- 1. Different purposes for different audiences.**

Beginning with a clear definition on the audience or partner as well as the purpose of the communication can ensure success. A key step in developing an effective communications plan is to clearly define both the target audience and the purpose of the communications plan to be developed.

The target audience for this communications output are the individual community members, the relevant political officials and partner NGO's. It was also noted that the communications plan should be designed in such a way as to promote future public awareness raising objectives of the ACCCA team members.

Although both the audience the purpose may evolve over the course of the project, having a clear objective for the communications strategy at each step in the process will help ensure success. The team acknowledged that there are very different purposes for a communications strategy. The objective of the communications strategy developed herein will be to inform and educate the public on the model outputs, in order to encourage a dialogue that will need to the development of response-oriented changes at the community level in the implementation of adaptation options.

2. Time.

Building a relationship based on trust and credibility with communities takes time and a long-term commitment which is likely to extend beyond the life of the project. The following is a list of activities and considerations related to establishing trust and credibility with the communities.

- 1) Three visits to the communities, all involving significant interaction with village members and elders have been conducted, in close collaboration with representatives of the local NGO and government officials. These field visits have helped to establish a relationship of trust, and mutual respect that will catalyze the implementation of proposed projects.
- 2) Given the need to better understand the community perceptions of climate change, during the December 2007 field visit, the team distributed a television, VCR and video camera to the communities- and the community representatives were trained via participatory methods to catalogue their experiences and challenges with respect to climate variability. These video documentaries will be collected during a May 2008 visit and subsequently utilized to build the video proposed under section 3.1.
- 3) The communications strategy will be integrated with the vulnerability and knowledge base available from each of the communities, part of which result from several field visits and the video created for the community of Massabla, along with the summary of the perceptions of risk survey, conducted in 2006-2007 under NCAP Phase I. Table 1 outlines some of these issues. The results of the Seasonal Calendar exercise (see Annex 1), carried out during the field visit to the community of Massabla in March, 2008- will also guide this process.

TABLE 1: UNDERSTANDING THE COMMUNITY NEEDS

Understanding the needs community (audience). Questions considered during the field visits
3. What are their day to day activities?
4. Do they believe they are at risk?
5. Do they know about climate change risk? What do they know?
6. What do they do before, during and after floods or other hazards?
7. What are the information gaps? What decisions do they face?
8. What information is most critical to those decisions?
9. When can they be reached and how?
10. Who would they listen to?
11. Do they have any plans? And if so, who follows them?
12. Do they think they are well prepared to cope?

3. Getting the message right.

At all stages of the communication strategy, the development of key messages is one of the most challenging aspects. The objective is to collate the relevant information, often from very different and dispersed sources and/or recombine primary information to provide audience-relevant insights and action items. The following questions will be considered in the design of the key messages for the communications strategy:

- a. **Key messages need to be appropriate to the suit the audience diversity.** The communications strategy needs to consider how the audience’s diversity may require information and training relevant to their situation, or a presentation that resonates with their experiences and needs. Careful attention will be placed in highlighting specific assumptions from the technical analysis in simple terms, and tailoring the level of detail to the audiences’ roles and interests. Table 2 will be compiled by the ACCCA team and distributed to the groups in charge of developing the proposed strategy. The field visit conducted with the community of Massabla was designed to gain insight into the appropriate communication methods that can be used to encourage community implementation of identified adaptation options.
- b. Time pressures, lack of understanding or familiarity with specific terminology, varied understanding on meanings of specific words; these are reasons for the failure of many communications strategies. **Simplicity of the message is key**, the audience needs to be able to link their daily activities to options discussed - but not at the expense of timeliness.
- c. **How certain are the findings?** In order to build trust and shared understanding, careful attention should be paid to uncertainties, weaknesses and gaps in the technical outputs.

TABLE 2: MESSAGE DEVELOPMENT

Stakeholder Group	Sample information preference	Examples	Communication Tips	Cautions
<i>Women</i>				
<i>Men</i>				
<i>Policy Makers</i>				

OUTPUT DESIGN

Based on several consultations with the communities, and acknowledging the need to develop effective communication materials for a target audience with limited reading skills- the communications strategy will target decision makers in three groups within the community: men, women, and village leaders. Model results will be discussed, noting where specifically identified adaptation options would help to alleviate some of the concerns and consequences related to expected changes in climate. Dissemination of results will be conducted using a two-pronged approach:

1) ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

An awareness raising musical (and possibly theater) presentation to the community of Massabla. The methods selected include collaboration between the students and director of the National Collage of the Arts, led by Mr. Masamou Dialo of the National Conservatory – and Mr. Diakite Cheick of the Hamala Labo SEP group, who have expertise in awareness raising activities using music and theater. These groups will work together to develop an awareness raising campaign with the communities using local music and dance. A video of the community visit during April of 2008 was made, and is currently being translated from Bambara to French. This video will provide the basis for the artist's formulation of the climate change conditions, tailoring the communication strategy to the community's expressed concerns. Considerations include:

- The strategy will be wholly oral, and may include a theater troupe to demonstrate the options and raise community awareness on the potential increased impacts of climate change.
- Music will adhere to local preferences, including the Balafone instrument in pentatonic style, which is typical of the region.
- The communications strategy will be conducted in the Bambara language, and perhaps theater to demonstrate the options and raise community awareness on the potential increased impacts of climate change.

2) OPTIONS VIDEO

A video demonstrating proposed adaptation options will be developed and shown to the communities to elicit feedback and encourage discussions of trade-offs among the proposed options.

Between 5-12 of December, community consultations were held at each of the project sites (Massabla-Sikasso Region, Kiban- Koulikoro region, and Segouo- Diona region) in close collaboration with the NGO partners to present the results of the scientific analysis and with the objective of identifying adaptation options. The objective of this mission was to identify critical areas and specific activities that could be developed as adaptation projects as a result of the scientific analysis conducted. Participants included (Boubacar Sidiki Dembele- Ministry of Environment, Sidi Kante- member of the project and professor at the ENI University National Engineering College, Mahamadou Ouedraogo-Toussa Basin Authority, Diakite H.- ENI, and Amadou Bamadio (STP/CIGQE Information specialist).

This was followed by a 2 day focus group workshop with NGO (SDI) representatives and the ACCCA project team in Bamako, Mali on February 2008. During this time, the following priorities were identified by study site (see attached Addendum for full project descriptions, including objectives, measurable indicators, expected outcomes and activities). This list includes both development and adaptation projects, as presented below:

Diouna village (Region of Segou)

- Facilitating and promoting irrigated agriculture - This project will seek to establish irrigation canals and infrastructure for the communities in Segou.
- Improving access to potable water -

Kiban

- Rehabilitation of village canal
- Install solar pumps to provide access to potable water

Massabla

3. Install solar pumps to provide access to potable water
4. Construction of a small dam on the Mono river

ANNEX 1: SEASONAL CALENDAR EXERCISE

OBJECTIVES

The seasonal calendar exercise was conducted during the field visit to the community of Massabla in March 2008, as a participatory way to explore seasonal changes and priorities for adaptation strategies in the community in terms of 1) gender-specific workload, 2) health issues, 3) income, expenditure and 4) water availability. The objective of the exercise was learn about changes in livelihoods over the year and to show the seasonality of agricultural and non agricultural workload, food availability, human diseases, gender-specific income and expenditure, water and forage availability.

All community members were present, with representatives from men and women participating.

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. What are the busiest months of the year?
2. At what time of the year is food scarce?
3. How does income vary over the year for men and women?
4. How does rainfall vary over the year?
5. How does water availability for human consumption vary over the year?
6. How does livestock forage availability vary over the year?
7. How do health conditions vary over the year?
8. What are women's/men's activities throughout the year?
9. Which could be the most appropriate season for additional activities for men and women? What time constraints do exist and for what reason?

PROCESS

Participants (one representative from women and men's groups, respectively) were asked to draw a matrix, indicating each month along one axis by a symbol. Discussions were held on the reasons for different answers by each representative, establishing linkages between different topics and encouraging discussions that could elicit group priorities.

OUTPUT

Only preliminary results are shown here in the following photographs. These will be used to develop the materials for Table 2 above.

