SECTOR EFFICIENCY IMPROVEMENT UNIT
Ministry Of Urban Development

NEPAL WASH SECTOR COMMUNICATION STRATEGY
AN INITIAL OUTLINE

Draft 1.2
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PART 1: WASH SECTOR and THE CHALLENGE OF COMMUNICATION

INTRODUCTION

This sub-section will explain the rationale for developing a sector-wide communication strategy and the importance of a participatory, multi-stakeholder process.

1. As with other finite public goods, water is a **complex, multi-dimensional and multi-stakeholder issue**. Sanitation, and the management of human waste in general, is also a culturally sensitive issue that inspires debate and public exchanges. Increasingly the country is concerned about environmental degradation due to disposal of untreated waste water and a lowering of the groundwater table due to uncontrolled abstractions. 'Green' thinking and a need to protect and adapt WASH services to the challenges of climate change has further generated initiatives by people, NGOs and the government.

2. Despite significant achievements in access and quality of service in the past twenty five years or so, **a lot remains to be done** if the country is to meet its goal of universal access to basic services in water supply and sanitation by 2017. Beyond achieving this basic human right, Nepal will need to address the aspirations of its population in improved water supply and sanitation services. It aims to do so through the **formulation of a National WASH Sector Development Plan 2015-2030**.

3. Communication – strategically coherent and operationally effective – is an **essential dimension** of the sector development plan. A communication strategy, developed, agreed, owned and operationalized by relevant sector stakeholders, is important to ensure information sharing, discussion and good governance on all aspects of the Plan and its implementation at national and district level.

THE POLICY FRAMEWORK

This sub-section will lay down the broad policy basis of the communication strategy. This framework defines the overall goal of sector development and therefore the key basis for messaging and communication in the sector (including two work-in-progress documents).

1. To understand the current and most relevant policy imperatives, it is important to have a brief **historical overview** of policy development/debates within the WASH sector, starting from the earliest policy mandates in the 1990s to those in the beginning of the 21st century.

2. The communication agenda and strategy will be based on final agreements around two on-going sector developments, i.e., the **Water Supply and Sanitation Act** (the umbrella act), with its **National Water Supply and Sanitation Policy,** and the **National WASH Sector Development Plan**.

3. The **key policy agenda** for the next years will focus on: (*provisional*)

   a. Ensuring universal access through a rights-based approach
   b. Promoting quality standards and operational excellence
   c. Participatory management for transparency and accountability

d. Strengthening the Sector through institutional development, capacity building and training, for sustained service delivery, using the National WASH Sector Development Plan as the instrument to ensure coherence, harmonization, coordination and linkages at all levels.

ECOLOGY OF THE WATER SECTOR IN NEPAL

This sub-section will explain the current situation within and among key sector stakeholders, both the challenges and resources.

1. While there have been significant improvements in stakeholder collaboration in the past few years, the challenge of addressing **fragmentation and fostering coherence** is still primordial. There is fragmentation at both horizontal (across government agencies versus civil society organization and private entities) and vertical levels (national in relation to district).
2. There are considerable communication and communication-related **competencies and resources** within these different stakeholders on which an effective, collaborative communication strategy can be developed.
3. It is important to harness this motivation to work together and the resources available in the sector to foster a **cost-effective** and **cost-efficient communication work** that will contribute to the achievement of the broad sectoral goals, objectives and policy agenda.

PART 2: THE WASH SECTOR COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

FRAMEWORK

This sub-section elaborates the main principles, theoretical framework and approach that will inform the communication strategy.

1. **Principles and Commitments**

   The foundational principles of the communication strategy will include the following:
   a. commitment to **results** - durable positive changes in policy and practice among stakeholders and institutions within the sector, including service and accountability to the people, especially within the understanding of water as a finite public good, appreciating the economic value and the need to protect public health through functional water supply and sanitation services, and 'do no harm' to the environment and stakeholders; results stand on engagement and action by difference stakeholders and audiences;
   b. commitment to **coherence** – fostering a collaborative culture among institutional stakeholders within the sector based on awareness of their respective responsibilities and required capacities; coherence stands on participation and ownership by different stakeholders and audiences;

c. commitment to **simplicity and adaptability** – opting for the simple rather than the complex and embracing and adapting to uncertainties inherent in sector development; simplicity and adaptability stands on a shared strategic perspective and aspiration among stakeholders and audiences and the ability to deal with complex situations.

2. Theoretical Framework

The communication strategy will be based on the following theoretical/conceptual references:

a. **communication for social change** – how communication contributes to building understanding, commitment and behavioural change towards transformative social action;

b. **corporate communication** – the importance of coherent and effective communication, both internal and external, and the need to build appropriate roles, competencies and skills within individual organizations, and the need for a strategic perspective especially among the leadership;

c. **aspirational communication** – the importance of communication that not only informs but also inspires audiences to aspire and act towards positive change in managing and protecting public social services

3. Approach

The communication strategy will feature the following approaches:

a. **multi-dimensional** – because of the complexity of processes and diversity of actors within the sector, the communication strategy will have to address various dimensions ranging from access to service quality to organizational alignment;

b. **multi-actor/multi-institutional** – an inclusive strategy will need to build on the various existing entities, relationships and resources, ensuring effective horizontal and vertical coherence (with particular attention to the relationship between national and district levels) anchored on a robust lead organization or entity;

c. **multi-platform** – an effective communication strategy will foster the synergistic effects of digital and analog platforms (electronic and print), new and traditional media (especially radio), online and face-to-face platforms, all harnessed and deployed to deliver mutually-reinforcing messages;

d. **sustained and regular** – adequate capacity needs to be build at national and district level in particular to ensure a sustained effort, with regular communication events, able to address change and new priorities.
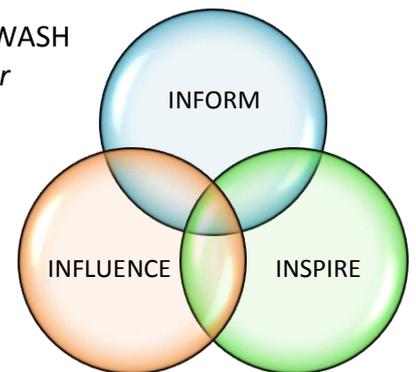
OBJECTIVES

This sub-section will explain the main objectives and sub-objectives of communication work in the sector. The final objectives and sub-objectives will depend on agreements reached in the formulation of the WASH act and the National WASH Sector Development Plan.

PRIORITY COMMUNICATION STREAMS

This sub-section will elaborate on the main strategic streams of communication work in the Sector

Key Message
The key message will reflect the rights-based perspective on water, i.e., "WASH is our common resource and responsibility." (*No matter what level and/or space of communication this should underlie all of communications and messaging, i.e., all internal memos, talks and conferences, media interviews, website, etc.*) This message will be communicated through three overlapping concerns of informing, influencing and inspiring key stakeholders and audiences. This is expressed in the following diagram:

Communication Stream 1: Universal access and rights-based approach

1. Objective
2. Key Message and sub-messages
3. Stakeholders and audiences – primary and secondary

Communication Stream 2: Quality standards and operational excellence

1. Objective
2. Key Message and sub-messages
3. Stakeholders and audiences – primary and secondary

Communication Stream 3: Participatory management for transparency and accountability

1. Objective
2. Key Message and sub-messages
3. Stakeholders and audiences – primary and secondary

Communication Stream 4: Strengthening Sector Management, coherence and linkages

1. Objectives
2. Key message and sub-messages
3. Stakeholders and audiences – primary and secondary

This document is work in progress; this draft outline gives an idea about the component and issues that needs to be addressed in future.

COMMUNICATION PROJECTS AND PLATFORMS

	Internal (Government Agency-Core Agency)	Intermediate (Sector-Multi-Stakeholder Spaces)	General Public
GENERAL PROJECTS	*To be filled in*	*To be filled in*	*To be filled in*
SPECIFIC PROJECTS	*To be filled in*	*To be filled in*	*To be filled in*
EVENT-SPECIFIC PROJECTS	*To be filled in*	*To be filled in*	*To be filled in*

Some dimensions that we need to communicate include for instance: (*ensuring reference to key sector functions of policy, planning and management; project development and implementation, community involvement, management of service delivery, regulatory arrangements*).

- Policies, statutory responsibility to inform
- Asset management
- Community WASH management
- Quality standards
- Hygiene
- Water conservation and 'Green' options such as ecological sanitation

In all of these, we will be making synergistic use of the following platforms:

- Broad platforms
  - Digital, social media
  - Traditional media-based
  - Face-to-face
- Targeted platforms
  - Event-based platforms – multi-media
  - Digital hubs
  - Etc.

PHASING

The phasing and interface of all these activities will be determined later and will be translated into a practical, realistic implementation plan. Choices and priorities will need to be made.

ORGANIZATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Institutional Roles and Arrangements

1. Key Institution – DWSS (SEIU) – MOUD (?)
   a. Sector leadership, providing internal and external context and requirements for effective sector work and communication
   b. Institutional and individual development – training, capacity-building; working with the NWSSTC
   c. Fostering effective linkages – internal to sector stakeholders and with other agencies including education and health sector
2. Mechanism – national to district - WASHCC
   a. The main organizational conduit should be the WASHCC system – starting with formalizing their mandate (from NWASHCC, RWASHCC, DWASHMC, MWASHCC and VWASHCC) and resourcing them accordingly
   b. Institutional and individual development – training, capacity-building; working with the NWSSTC
   c. Ensuring effective community users interface
3. Other Collaborative channels
   a. Multi-platform collaborative spaces, encouraging other stakeholders to contribute to the delivery of communication projects and objectives embedded in their work
   b. WASH forums and events (at all relevant levels)
   c. Communicators community – a special space/platform for communication specialists in key stakeholder organizations

(Take into account different levels and nature of stakeholders, from national government agencies, sub-national government agencies, water users at all levels, international agencies (donors and NGOs), multilaterals, civil society, media, etc. with different interests, communication resources and capacities.)

Part 4 RESOURCES/REQUIREMENTS

Budget
To be developed later, on a selective cost-item basis.

Other Requirements
Effective sector communication will require the following:
- Effective database and management information system
- Monitoring
- Feedback system

ANNEXES
(will be added later)