

NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Media Campaign Strategy

Aims

1. To attract people to participate in the NBSAP process, to give in their ideas, inputs and practical assistance so that the strategies and action plans drafted during the process will be truly representative, consultative, meaningful, and implementable.
2. In the process of doing the above, to involve people in understanding and developing the concept of biodiversity. This should become a well defined, meaningful concept that will entrench itself in the collective consciousness of the people, and not remain an ambiguous term that people cannot fully relate to.

Participant Audience

The participant audience is wide and heterogeneous. We're looking at every individual or organisation that has knowledge or resources to contribute. This includes the rural community of farmers and fishworkers (including adivasis), perhaps the most important segment of the participant audience. It also includes NGOs, government agencies, the armed forces, students, the academic community, professionals (lawyers, doctors etc), consumers, the corporate world and the media, and even housewives and househusbands....anyone who has knowledge of, or a role to play in, biodiversity related issues.

Strategy

The media campaign will employ the most cost-effective means, keeping in mind the limited funds available. The participant audience will be divided into well-defined groups in order to design the most effective message content and medium of communication for each group.

The following broad means, are proposed to be used as part of the Media Campaign:

1. Electronic media:

Public service advertisements promoting awareness about biodiversity should be aired on *radio* and *television*. Radio especially, is important because it is the most effective medium for the rural audience. Celebrity endorsements often prove to be extremely effective, so efforts could be made to get some to endorse our message. Much care and discretion will be put into the kind of celebrities we would want to associate with our cause. On *Doordarshan* and *AIR*, there is no telecast fee for public service advertisements, so the only cost incurred is the production cost. If a dialogue can be initiated between the MOEF and DD and AIR, we might even be able to wangle airing advertisements exhorting people to contribute to the NBSAP process as well, though these wouldn't technically qualify as public service messages.

Efforts must be made to persuade DD and AIR to make biodiversity awareness a part of their programme content. This is difficult unless separate funds are sanctioned and if they are not forthcoming from the MOEF, then corporate sponsorship should be explored as a source of funds for such programmes. With corporate funding, we can also use private satellite channels. Again, we shall be careful when short-listing corporate houses for funding, so as to associate only with those that are environmentally sensitive and compliant with environmental regulations.

We should also work with certain production sections of DD and AIR which are charged with the responsibility of public interest programmes. If the sections like youth, women, farmers for whom programmes are specially made on DD (Yuvadarshan, Krishi Darshan etc.) and AIR (Women's Prog, Farm and Home Unit) and give programme ideas to these producers, we have a bright chance of getting a lot of our programmes through.

We can also involve the *Countrywide Classroom programme of the UGC*. Countrywide Classroom has about 20 television studios all over the country capable of working in different languages. They can be persuaded to produce and telecast the NBSAP message. This could reach a certain number of serious students and teachers of universities.

The other segment to work on will be the *Teleschool* channel produced by the *NCERT*, for engaging children in our debate.

A *website* would be extremely useful, not only for documenting the NBSAP process, but also as a fast and effective means of getting feedback.

2. Print Media:

Advertisements in *newspapers* are extremely expensive, therefore *newsletters* and *journals* of NGOs, government agencies, professional groups etc must be made use of to publish features and print ads without incurring any costs.

The easiest way of getting print space is to hold *press conferences*. Therefore the State Committees, various NGOs involved in the process etc. should be encouraged to hold press conferences at the state and sub state levels where the print media can pick up the messages and give large spaces. In AP for example, most language newspapers have separate district editions. These district editions have special pages for sub district areas. If we can give enough material to NGOs in various parts of the country and encourage them to hold press meets, we can get several times more space than ads at a fraction of the expense.

A dedicated *NBSAP newsletter* containing reports and updates is a must. This can be circulated among all the relevant literate participant groups.

3. Networking with the media:

The media, especially the regional media, should be sensitised to the cause of biodiversity conservation; in many places they are already sensitive to it but lack information and material to publish. We must ensure that NBSAP and biodiversity issues are extensively covered by all forms of media. Many journalists are already working on or interested in these issues, and would go out of their way to cover the NBSAP related processes. Others may require a meaty news angle, so we must ensure that we have a bank of news worthy material that can be fed to them at regular intervals. Constant networking with newspapers, magazines, television channels and production houses and websites is a must.

4. Folk media:

Traditional forms of communication and entertainment are a very good medium for reaching out to the masses, especially in rural areas. A basic concept should be developed, which can be shaped according to the needs of diverse folk mediums. The concept note should help each group to develop scripts. Short one-day workshops in various parts of the country must be held to help and motivate the folk groups to carry on the campaign. It is also essential to network with cultural troupes and musicians, so that they can incorporate the message in their performances. They could also be additionally furnished with flyers and posters to be distributed among the audience.

5. Other visual media:

Posters with a lot of visuals and appropriate text must be put up wherever possible, especially in universities and offices.

6. The personal touch...

To get active people participation, the most effective method would be personal interaction and persuasion. This is especially true of rural areas where 'illiteracy' (though not necessarily resource illiteracy!) is common. There is no short equivalent for the word 'biodiversity' in a lot of languages. Not upsetting the ecological balance is so much a part of how they conduct their lives, be it in their farming or hunting methods, that many communities might not even realise that they have a store of knowledge that would be extremely valuable to the NBSAP, and even if they did, they really cannot be expected to communicate it in writing. In such a scenario, it is only logical that they be approached directly. It is therefore essential to first involve organisations that can establish direct communication with such communities and furnish them with simple media tools such as a slide show, or stick-on charts, or the enactment of a drama. There are also a host of participatory communication tools available that are being used by citizens' groups. Such tools can be used to persuade communities of the urgent need of their participation in the NBSAP process. This will of course also depend on whether the process is able to make itself relevant to the lives and livelihoods of these communities.

Media Campaign Structure

The NBSAP media campaign should by no means be centralised, but there must be a central body which will function as a think-tank, researching and designing each stage of

the media campaign, learning from experiences at the various levels of the NBSAP, issuing guidelines to all the commissioning bodies of media products, and co-ordinating the efforts of media makers at every level. This would make for a focussed and effective campaign and avoid the possibility of efforts becoming fragmented and ineffective.

It is therefore proposed to have a dedicated Media Campaign Manager (MCM), regularly interacting with TPCG, NPD, etc.¹ The MCM's functions are briefly given below. The MCM would be guided by two Media Campaign Advisors (one for print, and the other for electronic media).²

There would also be a larger, informal circle of media experts and mediapersons, from diverse forms and kinds of media, whose help would be regularly taken.

Media Campaign Managers' Functions

1. Conceiving a clear Media Campaign strategy for the NBSAP process, including finalising a note on this;
2. Conceiving and designing a series of advertisements for different audiences (NGOs, government agencies, academic institutions, armed forces, local communities, and others), May-June 2000;
3. Conceiving and designing a series of posters for inviting public inputs into the NBSAP, for use at various forums and places, June-July;
4. Assisting in identifying media persons across the country, who could be tapped during the course of the NBSAP, June-onwards;
5. Handling the press campaign aspects before and during the Inaugural National Workshop, June;
6. Guiding the design and publication of the proposed NBSAP Newsletter/Update, July-onwards;
7. Guiding the design and publication of relevant NBSAP material such as flyers and reports, from time to time over the next 6 months;
8. Collating a list of newsletters, journals, and periodicals into which NBSAP material can be channelised, June-July;
9. Assisting various executing agencies in media outreach, where-ever requested and possible, June-onwards;
10. Assisting in servicing the NBSAP website, July-onwards;
11. Assisting in conceiving and organising the proposed Biodiversity Mela, if funds are obtained for it;
12. Liaising with a broad range of media experts; specifically, taking advise from senior editors and producers

¹ The proposed MCM is Elizabeth Zopari, independent designer based in New Delhi. Ms. Zopari has helped to develop the NBSAP brochure *Call for Participation*.

² Tejbir Singh (Editor, *Seminar*), and Jai Chandiram (Indira Gandhi Centre for Arts), have been appointed Media Campaign Advisors to the NBSAP, the former for print media, the latter for electronic.

[This note has been prepared by Elizabeth Zopari based on an initial concept note by P.V. Satheesh, and with inputs from various TPCG members]