

## KEY MESSAGES

### *Seizing the Media Moment*

#### 2019 OECD DevCom Annual Meeting

Paris, 20-21 November 2019

#### THE CONTEXT: COMMUNICATING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN 2019

The year 2019 was shaped by civic movements and protest. Online and offline, people on all continents gathered to express their discontent and call for change. Their issues are diverse, but deeply familiar to all organisations working on sustainable development: climate change and conservation; inequality and employment; discrimination and human rights.

For DevCom members and partners, the new civic activists represent an opportunity. They have helped create a *media moment*, propelling sustainable development into the headlines. To seize this media moment, sustainable development organisations need new approaches to communications.

#### *Understanding New Civic Activists*

In Session 1, participants identified characteristics of the new civic activists.

- They **don't play by the rules**. Movements can emerge spontaneously from a classroom conversation, rather than long-term planning in “traditional” NGOs or trade unions.
- They are **driven by despair, not hope**. “You have stolen my future” has replaced “I have a dream” as a catchcry.
- They are **both global and local**. For example, while citizens in *all* countries care about the carbon footprint, their motivations vary from country to country.

#### *Navigating New Media Landscapes*

In Session 2, participants discussed how citizens engage with the facts in today's media landscape.

- With digital disruption, more and more news outlets are **dropping journalistic investigation and fact-checking** in favour of commentary and opinion writing.
- People are consuming information “through a firehose” and feel **overwhelmed and sceptical**. 4 in 5 US citizens view social media as biased, and 3 in 5 say they cannot keep up with the news.
- **Trust in evidence is low**. In France, a third of citizens consider vaccines unsafe. Among citizens in aid donor countries, the view that aid is largely lost to corruption remains entrenched.
- We need to **question our assumptions**. Rural audiences are more trusting of vaccines than urban ones. People from different generations can share similar media behaviours, suggesting that we should not make assumptions based on age.

## NEW PRINCIPLES & BEHAVIOURS: HOW TO SEIZE THE MEDIA MOMENT

If civic movements and new media have changed the game, then what do we need to do differently? How can we seize the media moment? Throughout the day, participants shared ideas, experiences and recommendations. Working in small groups, they also designed six mock campaigns for sustainable development. Their recommendations and mock campaigns are summarised in the tables below.

<b>FIVE PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE OUR MESSAGING ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT</b>	
<b>THE PRINCIPLE</b>	<b>AND WHY TO ADOPT IT</b>
<b>BE CONFIDENT, BUT HUMBLE</b>	<p>Great things happen in development and people need to hear the success stories. Yet, communicators often prefer to focus on the problems, particularly when they are trying to fundraise. To engage and inspire citizens, we need to be more positive and confident.</p> <p>However, there are two caveats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Being confident does not mean overselling our work. We are more credible when we admit that (a) things can go wrong and (b) good results come from a larger team effort.</li> <li>▶ Being confident does not mean moralising. We can inspire some audiences with moral arguments, but others will feel like we are talking down at them.</li> </ul>
<b>ENABLE, DON'T CO-OPT</b>	<p>The new civic activists are leading the way in engaging citizens. We should not expect to co-opt them for our own campaigns. Where possible, we can join and support them, provide them with information and amplify their voices. Going further, we need to provide them with genuine – not just tokenistic – opportunities to shape policy debates.</p>
<b>BLEND FACTS &amp; EMOTIONS</b>	<p>Some organisations focus on dry facts and abstract numbers in their communications. Others tug at the heartstrings. The challenge is to find the best blend of both. After all, our audiences take decisions based on emotions and instincts, but also seek the evidence to back up these decisions.</p> <p>To mix facts and emotions, we need to focus on the impact of our work on people's lives. Many organisations focus too much on inputs and processes.</p>
<b>BE NIMBLE &amp; RESPONSIVE</b>	<p>Development communicators tend to be risk averse, seeking to plan and pre-package their messages. However, civic activists and social media have put a premium on speed and flexibility. We need to be able to seize opportunities when and where they arise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Let journalists do their job and write the story. Provide them with relevant and clear facts, not institutional information and jargon.</li> <li>▶ Make content discoverable where our audiences are, rather than expecting audiences to come to us.</li> <li>▶ Keep content short &amp; accessible (e.g. short, mobile-friendly videos).</li> </ul>
<b>BE TRUE TO YOUR MISSION</b>	<p>Communications is not an afterthought. It has become "mission critical". We need to ensure that what we say is consistent with what we do. We also need to ensure that our messages are shared by everyone in our organisations.</p>

## GROUP EXERCISES: 6 CAMPAIGNS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

	School First, Babies Later	In My Name	Step Up to the Climate Challenge	Superpowers	Speak up for Safe Homes!	Gender Equality: Why Not?
GOALS	Improve reproductive health through increased access & awareness.	Promote advocacy for stronger climate plans.	Create climate champions by promoting positive, step-by-step action	Increase women's economic empowerment in the Sahel, changing attitudes among women & men	Increase awareness, recognition & reporting of domestic violence	End financial gender inequality by changing attitudes & ending discriminatory laws
MEASURABLE TARGETS	30% reduction in teenage pregnancies; mapping male & female perceptions	Global: # of governments making commitments to 1.5 National: governments increase ambition by 20%	Online engagement; personal carbon footprint; before-and-after survey	Local press & radio coverage; influencer engagement; pre- & post-campaign attitudes.	Increased rates of reporting and conviction; integration into school programmes	A government commitment by July 2020 & changed laws in 2 years.
KEY AUDIENCES	School age girls, teachers, parents, sexually active males & health workers.	Policy makers, general public, CSOs & NGOs	6-25 year-olds; teachers & parents	Students teachers, parents; religious & community leaders; media	Survivors of domestic abuse, whistle-blowers, local communities, police	Government, workers unions, businesses & international partners
SPECIFIC SEGMENTS	Girls in rural areas; parents; staff at schools & clinics; community leaders	Enablers: students, MPs, influencers, consumers, media & financial experts.	Schools & education ministries; Gaming media & influencers; CSOs for youth	Segmented by: age; urban/rural; interests; supporters/sceptics,	Schools, medical staff, social workers, judiciary, local businesses and NGOs	Parliamentarians, local governments, IFIs
MESSAGES	Visiting health centres gives you the freedom to plan your future	"In my name, I pledge to ___"	It's not too late to save the planet; every step counts; be a climate champion	Girls can do anything; girls can save the world. (a league of superheroes)	How-to messages: recognise, respond & report violence	More women, greater diversity; Hire more women & improve your bottom line
HASHTAGS	#SchoolFirst #BabiesLater	#InMyName	#NotTooLate	#Superpowers	#ImWithHer #SpeakUp	#EqualPay #WageGap
MESSENGERS	Girls: peer-to-peer	MPs, students, youtubers & activists	Greta, gaming & Instagram celebrities, athletes, musicians; children's TV characters	Super heroes (e.g. black panther's sister); local celebrities; community & religious leaders.	Survivors & loved ones; "reformed" perpetrators; senior authorities: police, judiciary & health	Celebrities (e.g. athletes), employers & employees
ONLINE CONTENT	Digital video stories, "this could be me"; infographics on family planning; Facebook groups for girls only	'In My Name' challenge; quote cards & videos; infographics on countries	Videos from Dora the Explorer; games promoting action; music videos & films	Testimonials by "progressive" men; Superhero social media accounts; video games	Mobile reporting app; targeted ads for the app; data on domestic violence; quotes	Video testimonials from 'reformed employers'; online petitions; infographics & comics, equal-pay heat maps
OFFLINE CONTENT	School talks from older girls; Pop-up stalls at music festivals; cartoons & soaps; subway signs; textbooks.	T-shirts (organic/recycled); postcards & exhibitions	School curriculum & school clubs, climate strikes	Comic book-style school workbooks & teacher toolkits; superhero collectibles; posters	Training for police & nurses; Hotline; ads in local theatres, radio & on posters	Awards/competitions for "good" employers; dialogue & events; Profiles, stories & rankings in trade magazines

## DAY 2: MEMBERS' SESSIONS

As every year, the second day of the Annual Meeting was dedicated to a series of members' sessions.

### *Engaging with Parliamentarians on Development for Accountability*

In this joint session with the OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation (EvalNet), participants agreed that there is a **growing need to communicate with parliamentarians**. In times of budget pressure, parliamentarians need to know that public funds are put to good use. Parliamentarians are also well placed to deliver messages about sustainable development to the local level – i.e. their constituencies.

Participants shared experiences in engaging with parliaments. As a first step, most development ministries/agencies comply with **formal reporting procedures**, for example by presenting reports to parliamentary committees or responding to parliamentary questions. Some members have begun to innovate by publishing shorter, more engaging documents, interactive digital reports and online portals.

Some development organisations also adopt **informal approaches** to engage parliamentarians in their work. This can include regular seminars, workshops and informal briefings, or even field visits to partner countries. For some, it means adopting specific communication tools, like tailored newsletters or podcasts.

Participants shared advice on success factors in engaging with parliamentarians:

1. Aim for **long-term relationships** beyond political cycles and across political party lines.
2. Focus on **two-way relationships**: by listening to parliamentarians and understanding their electoral constituencies, we can tailor our communications to their needs.
3. Go to **where parliamentarians are**, e.g. the newsletters they read; the podcasts they listen to.
4. Use **specific, relatable examples** to explain development work.
5. Be **truthful and authentic**. This means being honest about negative results, showing how you are responding to them, and having a strategy to anticipate when critics “cherry-pick” bad results.

The joint session was an opportunity for DevCom and EvalNet members to meet informally and discuss (a) how communicators can evaluate their strategies and (b) how evaluators can improve their communications. Participants agreed that both networks could collaborate again in the future.

### DEVELOPMENT NARRATIVES 2030: *Getting Our Stories Straight for the SDG Era*

In this session, participants discussed how their ministries and agencies were re-designing their narratives for development. They based this discussion on a sneak preview of the [Development Co-operation Report 2019: A Fairer, greener, Safer Tomorrow](#). The Report, now published, provides an easy-to-read overview of development co-operation today: why it matters, what it achieves, and how and what it can do better. The Report includes references to DevCom work on narratives and public attitudes.

Participants also discussed the OECD's [Development in Transition](#) work stream, which calls for a fundamental re-think of policies, practices and partnerships for development.

The 2020 European Development Days (June 2020) will provide a further discussion to continue DevCom's exchange on narratives, potentially focusing on the topic of migration and development.

## STAY IN TOUCH! JOIN THE DEVCOM COMMUNITY IN 2020

In 2020, DevCom will launch a new *Toolkit for Sustainable Development Communicators*, bringing together advice from and for the network's members and partners. We invite DevCom members and partners to continue sharing their ideas and experiences with us, both at events and online.

At the Annual Meeting, members proposed a number of topics that DevCom could explore in 2020: collaborating with the private sector on sustainability labelling; monitoring media habits & engaging with youtube news providers; collaborating with the entertainment industry (i.e. "soft powers"); social media analytics and audience segmentation; how to evaluate communications; engaging with "youth"; engaging in partner countries.

### HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN DEVCOM 2020

- ✓ Draft a guest post on the [The SDG Communicator](#).
- ✓ Share your experiences at a DevCom event.
- ✓ Host an interactive DevCom workshop or webinar.
- ✓ Join the growing group of official DevCom members.
- ✓ Share your initiatives on [our Facebook page](#).
- ✓ Use the hashtag **#OECDDevCom**.
- ✓ For more information, email [Dev.Com@oecd.org](mailto:Dev.Com@oecd.org).

## FURTHER READING: SELECTED INITIATIVES CITED AT THE ANNUAL MEETING

Many participants cited reports, campaigns and videos at the Annual Meeting. Here is a selection:

- The [African Youth Climate Hub](#), supported by the Mohammed VI Foundation.
- A [video on local heroes](#) from the perspective of micro finance recipients of BBVA.
- Deloitte's [analysis of modern audiences and digital media trends](#).
- The [SDG Tech Awards Denmark](#).
- Euronews' [The Cube](#) fact-checks the biggest stories on social media.
- A [video](#) on the development work of the [European Commission](#).
- The French Development Agency (AFD)'s "[Re-invent the world](#)" encourages schools to produce podcasts on sustainable development. AFD has also collaborated with an international comic book festival to illustrate the SDGs: [The Coloc Of Duty](#).
- Germany's "[Green Button](#)" initiative promoting sustainable consumption by placing a green buttons on sustainable textile items.
- Knight Foundation with Gallup: [10 reasons why Americans don't trust the media](#).
- In Nigeria, the '[World's Largest Lesson](#)' brought the SDGs to 50,000 Nigerian schoolchildren.
- New [OECD work on civic space](#).
- The Oxfam France campaign: L'Affaire Du Siecle ('[the case of the century](#)').
- In the context of the 2019 UN Climate Summit, the UN also hosted the first [Youth Climate Summit](#), bringing climate champions from over 140 different countries to the table.
- The [Wellcome Global Monitor](#) on trust in science, medicine and vaccines in 144 countries.