Workshop on
Developing an Effective
Communications and Outreach Plan
Hosted by
National Institute of Urban Affairs
through the CITIIS Program Management Unit

On 16th October 2020

Report prepared by
Swapnil Saxena, Knowledge Officer – CITIIS PMU
Shilpi Roy, Communications Specialist – CITIIS PMU

Graphic Design
Deep Pahwa
Devender Singh Rawat
Bhavnessh Bhanot
Preeti Shukla
Workshop on Developing an Effective Communications and Outreach Plan

16<sup>th</sup> October 2020
New Delhi
citiis.niua.org
Participants

Twelve Smart City SPVs part of the CITIIS program. Attended by the Project In-charges, the Public Engagement Officers, Environmental and Social Nodal Officers, and Technical Assistance, including International Mentors and Domestic Experts.

Presenter

Vidhya Mohankumar, Founder, Urban Design Collective (UDC) and Domestic Expert - CITIIS

Moderator

Swapnil Saxena, Knowledge Officer - CITIIS, National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA)
Background

As on November 2020, the projects in the CITIIS program are progressing towards concluding the maturation phase\(^1\) and kick starting the implementation phase. An important deliverable of the maturation phase, which is also a compliance document as per the Tripartite agreement signed between MoHUA, the State Government and the SPV is “Communication and Outreach Plan" (COP).

The Communication and Outreach Plan is also one of the key deliverables of the Public Engagement & Partnerships Officers hired by the SPVs under the CITIIS project.

To ensure that all communication is backed by an efficient strategy and is in alignment with the guidelines of the European Union (EU), The French Development Agency (AFD), and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), a 'mentoring session,' was organised by the CITIIS PMU on 16th October, 2020.

The objective of the session was to help develop a better understanding of the purpose of the ‘Communications and Outreach Plan,’ in urban development projects. In the session we discussed the process of preparation of a COP, the various elements that make an effective communications strategy, as well as the tools and methods one can deploy to operationalise the strategy.

Presentation

Vidhya Mohankumar made a presentation on a step-by-step approach of preparing a communications plan, and lays guidelines for developing, executing, documenting, and evaluating a communications strategy. Broadly, the content on the presentation included the following.

- **What is a communications and outreach plan?**
- **How is a COP different from a Stakeholder Engagement Plan and a Project Implementation Plan?**
- **Why develop a COP?**
- **Who should develop the COP?**
- **Prerequisites to developing a COP**
- **Methods and tools to operationalise a COP**
- **Implementation of a COP**
- **Evaluation of COP and Subsequent Action**
- **Capturing Learnings and Knowledge, as well as Dissemination.**

\(^1\)This is a nine-twelve month long preparatory phase which targets systemic planning by committing resources to project structuring. The operationalisation of the maturation phase is ensured by a 24 step framework – a stage wise mechanism in project structuring, that aims to ensure a holistic and integrated approach to project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, community engagement and adherence to environmental and social safeguards across all projects.
Key Takeaways

1. A COP encompasses different strategies used to educate, engage and involve various stakeholders around the objectives of a project in order to ensure it succeeds in a measurable way.

2. A typical process of preparation of a COP involves moving from strategy, execution, to documentation. The strategy involves understanding the project and its objectives, stakeholder needs and aspirations, and assessing their strengths and vulnerabilities; the execution phase involves creation of relevant and appropriate content, planning in advance the collaborations with stakeholders and all outreach activities. the documentation phase involves a systematic way to capture the outcomes and evaluate them against project objectives to capitalise knowledge that could benefit future projects. In case the execution does not yield a desired outcome, the strategy must be revisited and altered.

3. The multifaceted nature of large scale complex urban projects involves multifunctional stakeholder impacts and influence on the project. A COP makes it possible to target your communication accurately, helps to map out how to raise the project profile and refine your image in the community, and makes communication efforts more efficient, effective, and lasting.

4. The components of a strong COP include:
   - Laying the Ground Work: which includes explaining the project background to set context, deciding the communication objectives, assembling the team, and role identification of each, identifying tools and techniques, and developing a clear methodology.
   - Targeting the Audience: which includes stakeholder mapping of core stakeholders as well as external stakeholders;
   - Tools and Techniques: which includes identifying specific actions, activities and communications tools to use to communicate with various stakeholders;
   - Plan for Implementation: which involves developing a timeline and budget for identified communications and public engagement tools, and in the context of the CITIIS projects ensuring that all communication activities align with the overall project timelines;
   - Documentation: which involves diligently compile and assess information/feedback received to improve and enhance the results of the COP.

5. The tools and technique to develop and operationalize a COP include:
6. Branding guidelines are very important for creating awareness and a knowledge of the work being done. When followed, these guidelines enable a wider reach and recall for the projects and the CITIIS program. The SPVs must comply with the branding and communication guidelines by the AFD and EU, and ensure visibility by incorporating logos across all communication products.

7. Communication evaluation requires careful planning ahead and “on time” measurement. Once your communication activities are closed it is usually too late to measure. Besides being the only way you can tell if your communication has truly succeeded, evaluation:

- Improves the effectiveness of your communication;
- Helps engage your audience;
- Helps your team deal with situational change in the project; and Helps your organization allocate resources more effectively.

8. People are the ultimate users of urban interventions. Hence a good urban project should involve good communication and outreach with all its vital stakeholders in order to create a design for the people and by the people.
Session Outcome

The presentation was followed by a Q&A round moderated by Swapnil Saxena, Knowledge Officer at the CITIIS PMU. During the Q&A, the Public Engagement and Partnerships Officers sought clarifications pertaining to their roles and responsibilities, various elements in a COP, and on innovative ways to engage with the end users of the projects.

Following the session, NIUA in collaboration with Urban Design Collective has developed a ‘Toolkit for Developing an Effective Communications and Outreach Plan.’

This Toolkit has been developed as a reference for effective planning and execution of communication and outreach programs. It includes guidelines for strategy, execution, documentation, and evaluation phases of the COP, and has been tailored for projects under the CITIIS Program. However, the toolkit may be used by local governments and implementation agencies in urban areas to carry out their communication activities more.

The Toolkit is available at: http://citiis.niua.org/sites/default/files/Final_COP_Toolkit_12_November_2020-o-2.pdf
Annexure

Slides from the Presentation

COMMUNICATION & OUTREACH PLAN

A Primer

16 October 2020

1

WHAT?
**WHAT IS A COP?**

**Communication**

The transmission of ideas and information regarding a project to the various stakeholders directly or indirectly impacting the success of the project.

**Outreach**

Tools and techniques by which you reach and deliver your message to those critical audiences and engage with them.

A COP encompasses different strategies used to educate, engage and involve various stakeholders around the objectives of a project in order to ensure its succeeds in a measurable way.

---

1. **STRATEGY**
   - Understanding the project and its objectives
   - Understanding stakeholder needs and aspirations
   - Assessing strengths and vulnerabilities

2. **EXECUTION**
   - Creation of relevant and appropriate content
   - Planning in advance
   - Collaborations with stakeholders in some cases

3. **DOCUMENTATION**
   - Systematic way to document
   - To showcase the outcomes and evaluate them against project objectives
   - Towards knowledge capitalization
1. **STRATEGY**
   - Understanding the project and its objectives
   - Understanding stakeholder needs and aspirations
   - Assessing strengths and vulnerabilities

2. **EXECUTION**
   - Creation of relevant and appropriate content
   - Planning in advance
   - Collaborations with stakeholders in some cases

3. **DOCUMENTATION**
   - Systematic way to document
   - To showcase the outcomes and evaluate them against project objectives
   - Towards knowledge capitalization

If the execution does not yield a desired outcome, the strategy must be revisited and altered.

---

2

Why?
WHY DO WE NEED A COP?

Multifaceted nature of large scale complex urban projects involves multifunctional stakeholder impacts and influence on the project.

- A COP makes it possible to target your communication accurately.
- A COP helps to map out how to raise the project profile and refine your image in the community.
- A COP makes your communication efforts more efficient, effective, and lasting.

- MOST IMPORTANTLY, A COP MAKES EVERYTHING EASIER BY PROVIDING A BLUEPRINT FOR EXACTLY WHAT YOU SHOULD BE DOING AT ANY POINT DURING THE TIMELINE OF THE PROJECT.

IMMEDIATE BENEFITS OF A STRONG COP

Engaging Tools And Techniques

Better awareness about project among stakeholders

Valuable input is sought on concerns and aspirations of different user groups

Enhanced design solutions catering to the needs of the people are enabled

Smooth implementation with minimized risks

Successful patronage for the project
LONG TERM BENEFITS OF A STRONG COP

Transparency of the project objectives to the implementers, influencers and beneficiaries

To create awareness among the group directly vulnerable to the impact of the project.

To avert any crisis/potential risk that may arise during the course of the project.

Ensures that everyone’s concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.

To provide public with balanced and objective information to assist it in the understanding of the project.

Leads to better and specific design solutions most suited for the community.

To build community support for the project and enhance stakeholder relationships.

Improved sense of ownership and pride among stakeholders is fostered.

3

How?
COMPONENTS OF A STRONG COP

Lay the ground work  Target your Audience  Tools and Techniques  Implementation  Documentation

COMPONENTS OF COP

1. Lay the ground work

- Explain the project background to set the context
- Decide the communication plan goals and objectives
- Assemble the core communication team
- Develop organizing principles defining the roles, responsibilities of team members
- Evaluate resources and create a budget
- Fix on the key messages
- Identify various tools and techniques to spread the messages
- Arrive at a clear methodology to execute each activity within a specified time frame
COMPONENTS OF COP

2. Target audience

- Conduct an intensive study of stakeholders to set priorities in communication efforts (refer SEP)
- Identify key audience who should receive the project information
- Know your secondary audience too – those who are not targeted directly but are likely to hear the message second hand
- All categories of stakeholders must be considered in COP for effective and accurate spread of messages

COMPONENTS OF COP

3. Tools and Techniques

- Identify specific actions, activities and communications tools to use to communicate with various stakeholders
- The most effective approaches will target a specific stakeholder group(s) and ensure increase in the number of times these key audiences hear your messages
- Use regional languages to connect with the local communities
COMPONENTS OF COP

4. Implementation

• Develop a timeline and budget for identified communications and public engagement tools.
• Plan for the implementation of various tools during the overall CITIS matrix/timeline.

COMPONENTS OF COP

5. Documentation

• Diligently compile and assess information/feedback received to improve and enhance the results of the COP
• Do focus on consistent evaluation and rectification
4

When?

EVALUATING THE COP

- Best practice communication evaluation requires careful planning ahead and “on time” measurement.
- Once your communication activities are closed it is usually too late to measure anything.
5

Who?
COP, SEP, PMP... what’s the difference?
The SEP typically has 4 objectives:
1. Engagement for information dissemination
2. Engagement for collaborative activities
3. Engagement for design input
4. Engagement for implementation

Objectives of a Project management Plan (PMP) are:
1. Successful development of the project's procedures of initiation, planning, implementation, regulation and closure
2. Guidance of the project team's operations towards achieving all the agreed upon goals within the set scope, time, quality and budget standards

A COP is an action plan that effectively aids the SEP and PMP:
- To reach out and communicate with various target audience using engaging tools and techniques.
- To create better awareness about project and arrive at enhanced design solutions catering to the needs of the stakeholders.
- To arrive at enhanced solutions for smooth implementation and support for O&M post-implementation.

This strategic activity tailors the key stakeholders of the project with timely and appropriate communication actions to inform and engage them, thereby fostering a supportive environment throughout the course of the project including after its implementation.
Communication Tools and Techniques
Event Conducted on 2nd October: “Swachhata Hi Seva Plastic Waste Shramadhan Program”

Effectively using opportunities to spread awareness about the objectives of the project and target different risks associated with the project.

CYCLOTSAVA

HUBBALLI – DHARWAD SMART CITY AND HUBBALLI CYCLE CLUB AND VARIOUS NGOs

To encourage cycling and spread the objectives of the Project.
RADIO SHOW CONDUCTED FOR 6 DAYS TO KNOW THE PERCEPTIONS AND ASPIRATIONS OF THE PEOPLE FOR GREEN MOBILITY CORRIDOR PROJECT

Valuable inputs were documented with stakeholder reference.

SAMPLE OF BROCHURES AND PAMPHLETS GIVEN TO EVERY HOUSEHOLD RESIDING ALONG THE NALA TO PROMOTE AND SPREAD AWARENESS ABOUT THE PROJECT.
To reach out to all the diverse population, separate page was created on the MUSSC web portal to give all the updates on the project.

A smooth successful implementation and post-implementation patronage

Stakeholders + COP
People are the ultimate users of urban interventions. Hence a good urban project should involve good communication and outreach with all its vital stakeholders in order to create a design for the people and by the people.

Hint: USER CENTRIC DESIGN APPROACH IS THE CORE PRINCIPLE FOR COP!