

Guidelines for communications and advocacy strategy for the Cooperation Framework

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1. This guideline is a result of an inter-agency effort with the UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) communications focal points. The taskforce was co-convened by the Development Coordination Office (DCO) and the Department of Global Communications (DGC).



1. Introduction

The objective of this document is to provide practical and user-driven guidance to help UN Communications Groups (UNCG) in countries design effective communications strategies aligned with the UN Global Communications Strategy and the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (or Cooperation Framework). **The Cooperation Framework is the primary instrument for planning and implementing the UN development activities at the country level in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.** The UN Global Communications Strategy aims to enhance the coherence and consistency of our communications and maximize its impact. A well-planned joint communications strategy is essential to supporting the UN team and partners to lead the narrative, achieve results, mobilize key audiences to care and take action for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This is more important than ever in this “Decade of Action”. In addition, a properly budgeted joint communications strategy can contribute to achieving the results of the Cooperation Framework by building public support for the work of the UN. This guidance is aligned with the Management and Accountability Framework (MAF) of the UN development and Resident Coordinator system, which “provides a clear, unambiguous framework for management and accountability within UN Country Teams”. **For the UN to help build and sustain bold action for the SDGs over time, it needs to focus on strategic communications, beyond informing the public, so that people care, take action and bring change!** It also lets partners know what the government's priorities are, what the UN and its partners are doing to support those priorities, and how they can get involved.

At the country level, UNCGs play a crucial role in supporting UN Country Teams (UNCTs) and partners implement change as outlined in the Cooperation Framework outcomes. **Communications and advocacy are not only a means to promote results and impacts of fieldwork but can also contribute directly to the achievement of results. We must fully integrate communications and advocacy into the full cycle of programme planning and delivery. The allocation and optimization of the UNCT's human and financial resources and the mobilization of additional funds will strengthen the role of communication and mobilization for action as an integral step to achieve sustainable and inclusive development.**

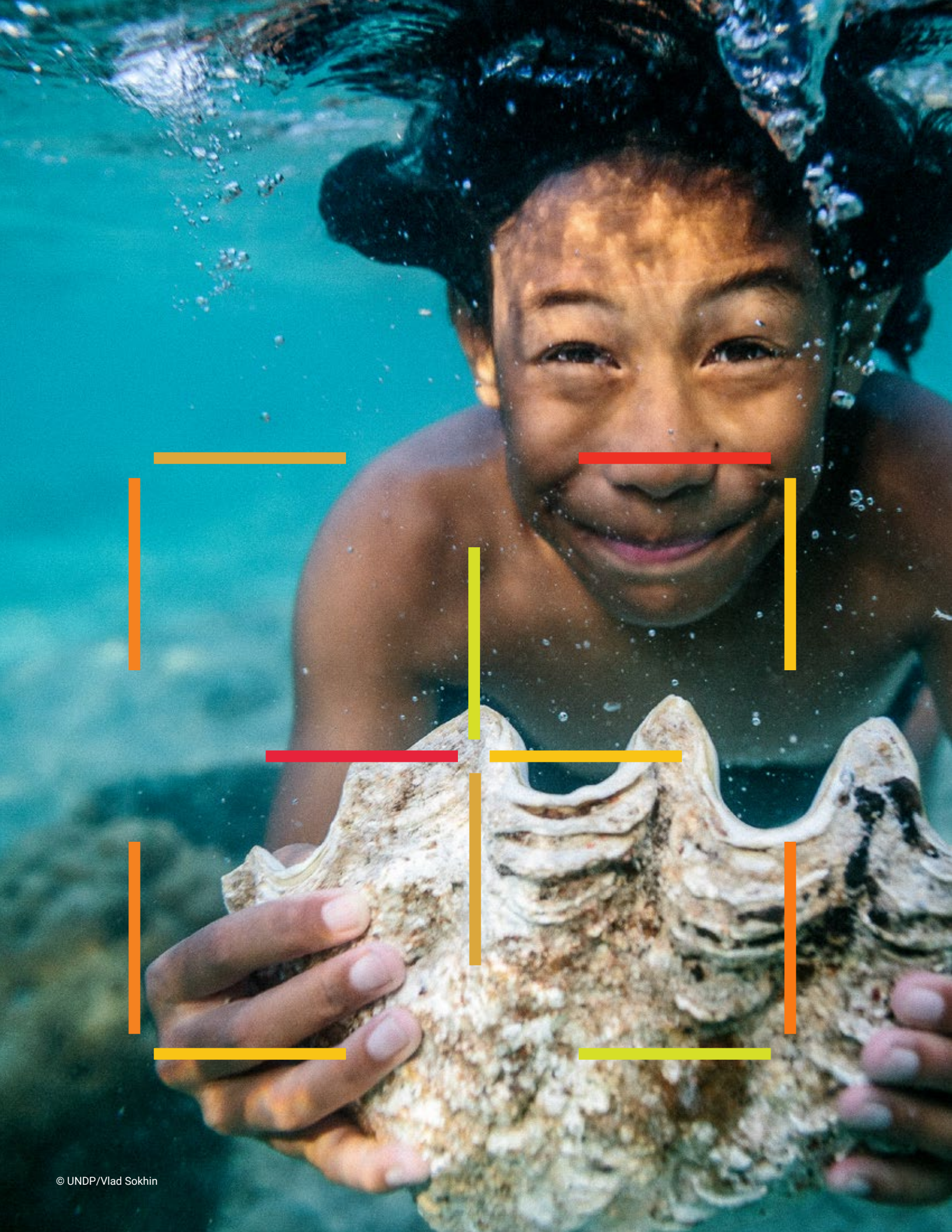
Strategic communications are essential to the design and implementation of the Common Country Analysis (CCA) and the Cooperation Framework. It serves to inform various stakeholders including government, development partners, local population including marginalized groups about what the UNCT is doing, including in the CCA/Cooperation Framework design process and implementation. Strategic communications also draw attention to, and advocate for, priority national development issues and policies that the UN and other national stakeholders should support to help accelerate progress towards the 2030 Agenda in the country.



Communications plays an important role in gaining public support and building trust in the work of the UN around the world. To achieve our goals, we must be able to communicate about them effectively and strategically.

Communicating our work and results must be at the centre of all UN activities. It should not be an afterthought, but rather an integral part of the UN's work. The UNCG plays a critical role in creating and maintaining awareness of the results of UN reform and how it has made a difference at the country level, among development partners and UNCT members.

This document has two parts. The first details the clear role of the UNCG throughout the cycle of the Cooperation Framework. The second part provides a practical guide and template to help UNCGs design and implement effective communications strategies, aligned to the UN's Global Communications Strategy and pegged to the Cooperation Framework to address individual country needs.



2. UN reform as it relates to communications

In recent years the UN has undertaken a process of reform in order to “**best position the United Nations to deliver on humanity’s boldest agenda: the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),**” as stated by UN Secretary-General António Guterres.

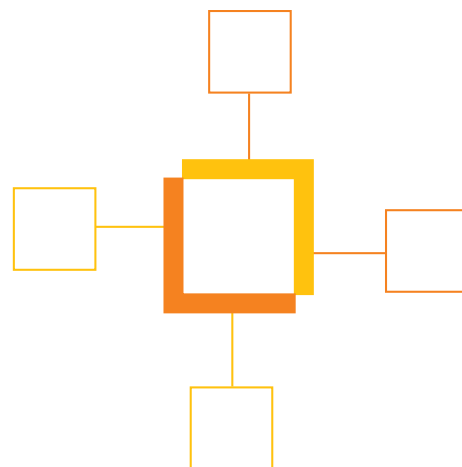
Some of the reforms’ sweeping changes make way for **a new generation of UN Country Teams (UNCTs)**, bringing together all UN entities in each country to collaborate more closely under the leadership of an impartial, independent and empowered Resident Coordinator (RC), as of 1 January 2019.

A new generation of UN Country Teams requires a new generation of UN Communications Groups. It requires the UNCT to “communicate together”, conveying the UN’s work on the complex and interrelated SDGs in a coherent, powerful and non-siloed way. A robust and well-coordinated UNCG is essential to fulfil the Secretary-General’s vision, outlined in his 2017 report, of enhanced capacity and skillsets at the Resident Coordinator Office to support countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Secretary-General proposed “that an integrated communications structure be formed in each country by co-locating and merging the country offices of the United Nations information centres with resident coordinator offices. (...) Merging these two capabilities will generate a robust standing communications capacity within United Nations Country Teams, **working alongside communications specialists from all entities to boost impact [of UNCTs’ work for the SDGs], while producing significant cost savings.**”

The UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (Cooperation Framework)

, previously known as UN Development Assistance Framework has been elevated to the most important UN instrument of planning and implementation of UN collective support to Government in response to national priorities and plans for achieving 2030 Agenda in the country. The UN team prepares it with a diverse range of stakeholders, including the host Government, which also co-signs it. UNCT members derive their individual country programmes from the Cooperation Framework. The Cooperation Framework also influences the profile of UN entity representatives.

In each country, **the UN Communications Group (UNCG)** is an integral part of the Country Team. As such, UNCG representatives should be involved from start to finish in the design, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of the Cooperation Framework. This enables them to best support the work of the entire UN Country Team, including through greater communications of development results and increased transparency and accountability - to governments and the general public.





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To better enable the UNCG to fulfil the Secretary-General's vision of a post-reform setting, this Guideline recommends that:

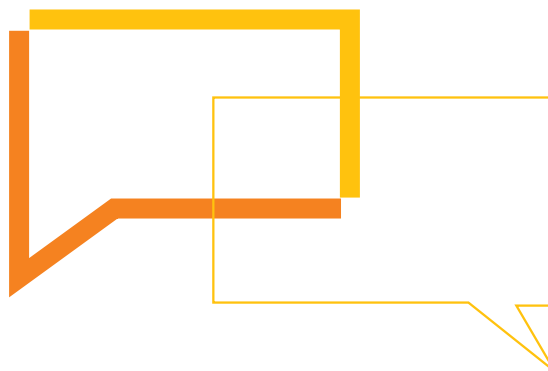
- 1 All UNCG members in agreement with their supervisors should include a **goal in their performance management document** to reflect their time, work and results, collaborating with the UNCG. **The performance appraisal of agency members of the UNCG remains the sole prerogative of the agency supervisor. The supervisee may request comments and inputs from other UNCG members, including the UNCG Chair.**
- 2 All UNCT members (UN entities signatory to the Cooperation Framework) nominate one focal point to be a member and regularly participate in the UNCG planning and activities. **Therefore, the UNCG composition should mirror the UNCT composition – including entities not physically present – to make the most of strategic communications throughout the cycle of the Cooperation Framework.**
- 3 It is recommended that the **chair of the UNCG is the Resident Coordinator, a head of UN agency, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General or the international-level Director of the UN Information Centre. If that's not possible, the UNCG should be chaired by the senior-most communications colleague in the UNCG.**
- 4 It is recommended that the **chair of the UNCG joins the UNCT meeting** and frequently updates UNCT senior leaders on the work around communications, providing feedback to the UNCG for alignment and fine-tuning of the Group's work.
- 5 If the RC does not chair the UNCG on a regular basis, it is recommended that **she/he joins UNCG meetings** at least once every quarter to convey the important role of the group to lift the UNCTs' work.

While serving as Resident Coordinator in Togo, Damien Mama chaired the UN Communications Group and brought key issues to the discussions at the UN Country Team meetings. This helped position strategic communications and advocacy issues for decision-making at the highest UN levels in the country, especially during a global pandemic. The chairmanship of the UNCG was later passed on to the World Health Organization. “It is important to keep the chairmanship of the UNCG at the head of agency or RC levels because this empowers communication focal points and effectively leverages the whole of system resources to strengthen strategic communication as an integral offer from the UNCT towards the 2030 Agenda.”

Strategic communications help ensure that the work of the UN is transparent, accountable, and carried out in partnership with the communities that “own” that work. Through effective communication, we can help ensure the coherence and visibility of the UN’s actions. With a focus on cause communications, we will capture our audience’s imagination while offering examples and ways problems can be solved.

Communications and advocacy are a means to disseminate results but also to deliver results and encourage behavioural change, encouraging audiences to take action for the SDGs. They should be incorporated into planning and delivery. **Each UNCG communications strategy should have a budget, which should be approved by the UNCT, and included as part of the Cooperation Framework budget, reflected in the Funding Framework².** An integrated agenda calls for communications and programme colleagues to work together from the start. The results: greater impact for people.

Both guidelines ***Communicating Together*** and ***Fulfilling the promise: Best practices for UN Advocacy to promote implementation of the 2030 Agenda*** lay the foundation for joint UN communications and advocacy to lift the work of the UNCT. As **communication supports the results of Cooperation Frameworks, the UNCG should be involved from the beginning and in the different phases of the cooperation framework design, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation.**

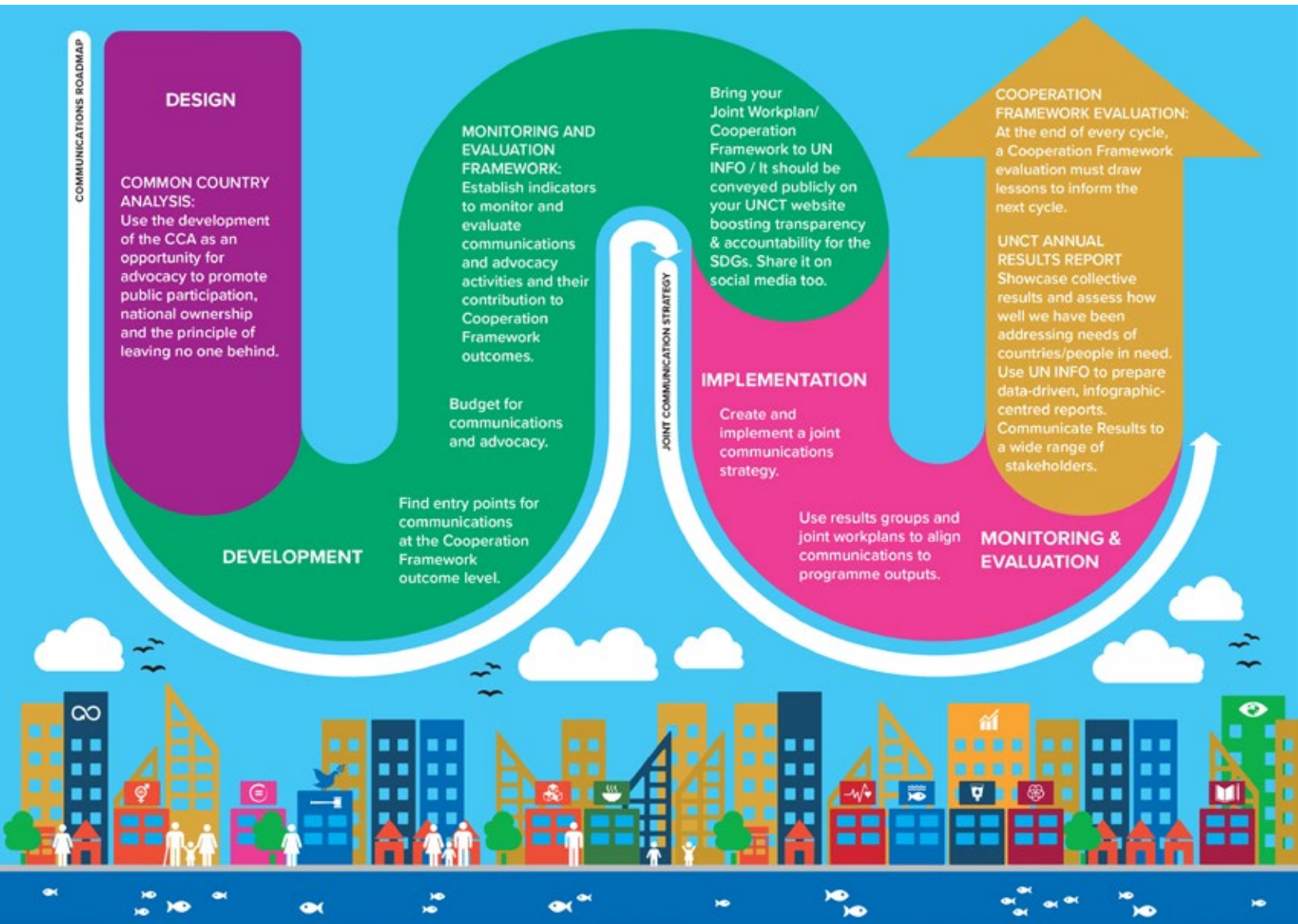


2. The Cooperation Framework at the point of joint signature (UNCT and host government) does not yet have a budget /Funding Framework, which is prepared after UNCTs have prepared their Joint Work Plans (JWP). There should be plenty of opportunity to include communications activities and funding requirements in the JWPs and Funding Framework. This may also be complemented with specific UN entity budgets and then subsequently pooled for collective use, ensuring that this is integrated in specific UN entity inputs into the JWP and Funding Framework. For joint programmes, a communication budget can also be specified in the budget headings, for example Spotlight, Joint SDG Fund, PBF, and others. The UNCT may also agree on a percentage of budget for its communications. This should all be captured in the communications activity and funding requirements in the JWP and Funding Framework.



3. Entry points for UNCGs to strategize on how to support and sustain each stage of the Common Country Analysis and Cooperative Framework cycle

The roadmap relates to the inclusion of the UNCG in the whole Cooperation Framework cycle. UNCTs should have a roadmap document that details the entire process of designing the Cooperation Framework. **The UNCGs need to engage during the roadmap phase to identify from the start the ways strategic communications and advocacy should be factored in throughout the subsequent months. It is important to note that strategic communication requires the active participation of UNCG members. It is not just a matter of the Heads of agencies or RCs. This engagement must occur early in the programming cycle process to ensure better support to planning instruments and the design and implementation of the joint communications strategy.**





The Common Country Analysis

The Common Country Analysis (CCA) is the UN's independent and impartial assessment and analysis of the country's progress towards the 2030 Agenda. It is prepared in consultation with Government and a diverse range of stakeholders, namely development partners, academia, private sector, community organizations, civil society, marginalized groups etc. The CCA has shifted from being a one-time document to a continuous process of data collection and analysis on the evolving country context, throughout the life cycle of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. Therefore, the CCA is updated annually. The CCA is a mandatory exercise and will benefit hugely from the UNCGs. The CCA guidelines recommend that it is made public, posted on UNCT websites.

→ **Prior and during to the CCA:** Mapping the participants to be involved, the UNCG can support awareness raising and encourage engagement in the CCA processes planned for each target group (government, civil society, development partners, marginalized/vulnerable groups, private sectors, academia, women's groups, youth, etc.).

→ **Once the CCA is completed and key national priority issues have been identified,** the UNCG can assist the UNCT in:

- (i) Present and appropriately disseminate key priority issues (e.g., overlooked population subgroups) among different stakeholders in the country.
- (ii) UNCGs can assist UNCTs/policy teams in presenting a message for key policy issues/briefings that target government and development partners for action and funding. For example, such a note could be prepared for a breakfast meeting targeting the Ministry of Finance and the parliamentary committee on budgets before the national budget process begins.
- (iii) Map human and financial resources available for UNCT communication. This analysis will highlight existing resources within the UNCT, assess potential funding gaps and propose strategic directions to mobilize adequate funds for the effective implementation of the joint strategy.

An opportunity for advocacy

The Common Country Analysis (CCA) and the Cooperation Framework should be used as a basis for advocacy, to raise awareness and inspire action. If the RC/UN Country Team agrees, the UNCG can use the publication of the CCA to incorporate data into key messages for use in speeches, press releases, and messaging on specific issues. In this way, UNCG advocates for priority needs of the country and its most marginalized communities. Some UNCG/UNCT have used real time monitoring software like Rapid Pro to assess certain group's needs. This was especially the case in Benin. UNCGs can bring all the knowledge of traditional and social media to the discussions too, also mapping key influencers, youth leaders to be involved in the process and join the UN team and partners in this Decade of Action for the SDGs.



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In Costa Rica, the UNCG, chaired by the Resident Coordinator, Allegra Baiocchi, used the Common Country Analysis (CCA) to plan their communications strategy and workplan. Among other findings, the analysis revealed a strong discrimination against Afro-descendants in the country. In a country with a population of over 5 million, the UNCT, with UNCG's support, mapped over half a million hate speech messages on social media targeting Afro-descendants, migrants, women and LGBTQI, among others. Among other activities, the UNCG beefed up their advocacy work to leave no one behind, including through a series of stories depicting Afro-descendants as leaders and agents of change in their communities. The stories have reached over 50 thousand people and have served as a basis to create training and public service announcements through national and rural radio stations, reaching more than 300,000 people. Following the RC/UNCT initiative, the country adopted in June 2021 the first national plan against hate speech and discrimination in Latin America and the Caribbean.³

3. The Government of Costa Rica proposed a resolution co-sponsored by 52 countries and adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2020 to proclaim August 31 as the International Day for People of African Descent.

B

Cooperation Framework Design Phase

- (i) Raise awareness of the design process and encourage the engagement of a wide range of targeted stakeholders (such as the private sector, the media, civil society organizations, etc.) in the process.
- (ii) Publicize the UN's planned support for the national priorities of the 2030 Agenda, at the signing of the Cooperation Framework document.
- (iii) Remember you are not actually trying to “sell” the CCA per se but highlighting the “what” on the key areas of focus. Aligned to the Global Communications Strategy, on the “now what” you should aim to make people care and encourage key audiences to take action for the SDGs and to leave no one behind.

User experience research and analytics show that users visit UNCT websites and want to “take action”. Mobilize your crowd – in local languages – for the SDGs!



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Funding Framework

Funding Framework is the basis for a Resource Mobilization Strategy, including periodic funding dialogues with Government and donors that recognize the need to better align financial support to the UN development system with the needs of the international community in the Cooperation Framework. The Funding Framework is translated and operationalized annually as follows in the context of the UN Joint Work Plans.



The UNCG can support the UNCT in planning joint dialogues for funding of the Cooperation Framework.

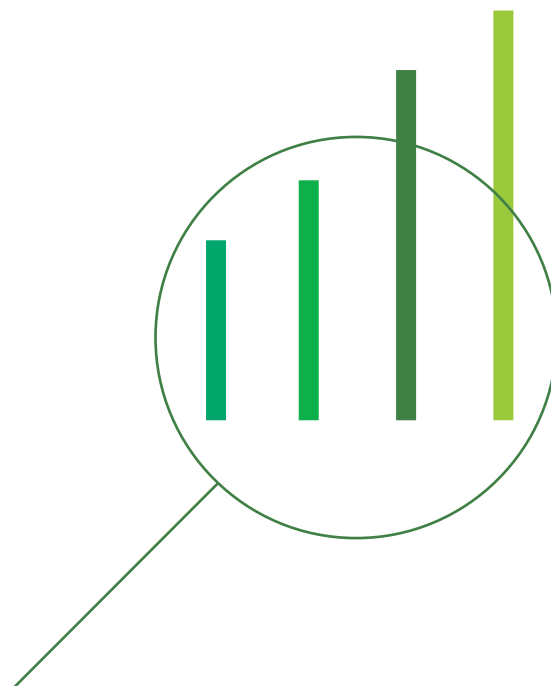


Cooperation Framework Implementation Phase

- (i) Create awareness about what the UN is doing, where, in partnership with stakeholders.
- (ii) Deliver key messages in support of programmes to achieve the Cooperation Framework outcomes.
- (iii) Support advocacy efforts for policy changes and behavioral changes as planned by UNCTs, Results groups and Policy teams.
- (iv) In line with the commitments in the Funding Compact, the UN development system will give visibility to donors and core and pooled fund contributions in communicating about the Cooperation Framework.
- (v) Here, again, you are not actually trying to “sell” the Cooperation Framework as a document per se but highlighting the “**what**” on the key areas of focus of the UNCT as agreed with the host Government. Aligned to the Global Communications Strategy, on the “**now what**” you should aim to make people care and encourage key audiences to take action for the SDGs and to leave no one behind.

(vi)

Forget the UN jargon! Explain it in a simple and effective way so your aunt, your uncle or a high school student can understand.





UNCT Country Results Reporting

- (i) Communicating results is an essential part of the role of this new generation of UNCGs. Be creative to communicate results and put together a visually compelling report. Do you need to print or can you “walk the talk” and go green? Or you can print something visually engaging, adapted to key audiences in a strategic event, like a ministerial meeting, a parliamentary event, an event with national youth delegates, etc. Make use of your UNCT/UNCG’s beautiful photos and UNCT Annual Results report infographics that clearly convey your results. Use UN INFO “widgets” in stories, blogs and more. Studies show that not that many people click on reports, not that many people download them either.
 - So, make use of visually compelling ways to flesh out your key messages, results and tell your story.
- (ii) Tailor appropriately for different stakeholders and create awareness about the key achievements/successes and challenges in supporting national progress towards 2030 Agenda each year. This should also create visibility for development partners and donors' results achieved through core and pooled funding as above. [For more information see the [Guidelines for UNCT annual results reports](#)].
- (iii) Your strategy will map key stakeholders at the local, national, regional and international levels. Use social media, including cards, to let them know your results are out there. (See below).

UN INFO

Work with your data colleagues in the RCO and all the UNCT to ensure that your Cooperation Framework can be visualized on UN INFO and made public on your UNCT website. Through increased transparency and accountability, you can see which UN entities work on which SDGs, and where, source of funding and implementing partners. Some UNCTs are showing not only what UN entities are doing on SDGs but also showcasing progress for each Goal, pulled automatically from DESA.



Cooperation Framework Evaluation Phase

- (ii) Spread the word. Publicize key successes/ transformation in the country attributable to the UN support, and areas for improvement, and proposed focus for next planning period.
- (ii) Create visibility for Government and donors that partnered with the UN.
- (iii) Learn from successful experiences and remaining gaps by actively promoting knowledge and contributing to the sharing and replication of best practices among countries.



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“The SDGs are our compass for bolstering a better COVID-19 recovery” – Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed

The SDGs are a hugely ambitious agenda to be achieved by all by 2030. For any country to achieve the SDGs requires the coordination and support of the UN, government, and partners in all sectors of society – which includes those farthest behind.

To combat misinformation on COVID-19, the Inter-Agency Communications Group in Panama partnered with the Office of the First Lady to launch a digital campaign to address vaccine safety and equity, that reached 10 million people since its debut in August 2021.

Find the right “influential” to embrace the SDGs with your UNCT and partners. Do your due-diligence and find those that will bring more opportunities than risk to your work, your strategic objectives and the UNCT brand. They don’t even need to have official titles of “ambassadors”. During the SDG Moment at the General Assembly, through a partnership with the Republic of Korea, K-pop band BTS performed at the General Assembly Hall, resulting in a YouTube video with more than 32 million views in one month. This partnership helped position our messages of peace, prosperity, hope and vaccines for all.



4. Devising a joint communications strategy

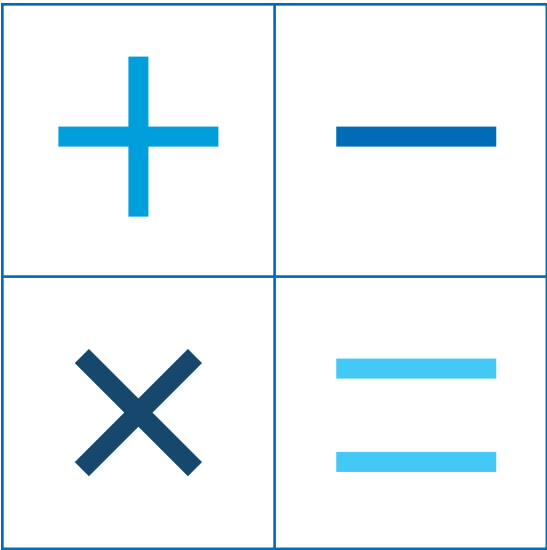
A communications strategy prepared for the Cooperation Framework should help the UN development system convey in a simple and concrete way what the UN is doing to help a country achieve the SDGs.

It should reflect:

- How the Cooperation Framework expects to contribute to priority pathways to achieve the SDGs;
- The UN development system’s focus, contributions and measurement of results in line with the Cooperation Framework Guiding Principles;
- Who is responsible for delivering on what, by when and by what means; and
- How these activities are linked to national development, human rights, humanitarian and peace frameworks.
- The solutions-centric approach to communications outlined in the UN Global Communications Strategy
- Dissemination of this information should be in an accessible language and format, and consider issues such as disability, language, literacy levels and cultural background.
- In line with the commitments in the UN Funding Compact, the UN development system will give visibility to core and pooled fund contributions in communicating about the Cooperation Framework.

The communications strategy must also be informed by the Common Country Analysis, which in turn synthesizes the knowledge shared by the entire UN Country Team, the Government, and other national stakeholders, including the voices of marginalized communities. By building on the CCA, the communications strategy is more closely linked to the people the UN serves.

Many UNCGs have held communication retreats to plan their strategy together, drawing on the resources of all involved. Some countries brought in outside consultants to facilitate a session to help group members think through a strategy. Others have convened focus groups with a variety of stakeholders or hired private companies to study public perceptions of the UN and/or the SDGs to measure the impact of the strategy: before and after. Whatever process you use, the strategy should draw on shared communications assets throughout the UNCG and the whole UN Country Team.





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A properly budgeted joint communications strategy prepared in consultation at country level with – as appropriate - the Results Groups, Policy Group, Programme Management Teams, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Group and UNCTs can help achieve the objectives of the cooperation framework and should therefore be included in the Cooperation Framework Funding framework, as recommended by the group.

Raising awareness, engaging the public, and changing perceptions and behaviours are objectives of effective communication. Through proactive and effective communications, the UN can better connect with the people it serves and work together to create a compelling vision for the future and mobilize people to achieve that vision and the SDGs.

In close coordination with UN Country Teams, several countries have undertaken an assessment of public perception of the UN in traditional and social media, in order to have a baseline of how the UN is perceived by the public (or by different target groups), thus establishing a benchmark for a change in public perception, following the work of the UN Country Team implementing the Cooperation Framework. This analysis can also be complemented by a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis.



5. Annex

Guidance on how to apply the UN Global Communications Strategy Template to your country setting

The Global Communications Strategy informs our approach to communications. UNCTs are requested to complete a joint communications strategy at the country level. The DGC Global Communications Strategy Template should be used to help plan and implement the joint communications strategy as well as strategies for specific campaigns and issues within countries or across regions.

I. Introduction

An introduction provides the United Nations' overall context and underscores major areas and priorities found in the Cooperation Framework. It also conveys the benefits that an integrated communications capability will bring to the UN system. To optimize the use of communication products, UNCTs are encouraged to share their assets and can create a central repository of photos, videos, logos and official communications materials. The pooling of production efforts will reduce associated costs and ensure better visibility of the materials.

- Describes what the UN does and stands for in the country, building on the Common Country Analysis and the Cooperation Framework.
- First, identify the needs and challenges in the country, and then the expected results and impact. Underscores major areas and priorities found in the Cooperation Framework (the WHY of the communications strategy/Why you are communicating/ Which issues you are addressing).
- Conveys the benefits that an integrated communications capability will bring to the UN system.

II. SWOT Contextual analysis

› What is the setting?

The contextual analysis describes what the UN does and stands for in the country. Some countries use a SWOT analysis that summarizes the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats for UN system from a communications perspective.

Strength – internal strengths of your UNCT– You should think of your competitive advantages (individually and as UNCT), map out your communications assets, (operational, financial and human resources), which joint activities have had the most impacts, which best practices can be replicated and scaled up.

Weaknesses – internal “weaknesses” or matters that hinder your UNCTs’ effectiveness – You should think of your financial and human capacities, map out your communication gaps, which joint activities need to be strengthened and how.

Opportunities – external, contextual issues that can open space for the UNCT to have more impact, working with all of society for the SDGs, especially the influencers, the media and faith-based and youth organizations. You should list the CSOs that are/could be involved in; can you identify the most impactful communication channels to reach your audiences; can you identify which are the most spoken languages in the country.

Threats – external, contextual issues that can hinder the ability of the UNCT to do its work, decreasing its impact, also potentially serving as reputation issues) - what contextual factors such as social, cultural, economic and political have you identify as obstacles.

- The Common Country Analysis feeds into the Cooperation Framework preparations. The place where the role of the UN, vis-a-vis and with other stakeholders should be clearly outlined is the Theory of Change of the Cooperation Framework.
- May be based on a brand awareness study, focus groups, partnership surveys, or any other surveys assessing public awareness, attitudes and perceptions of UN activities, priorities, and image.
- Analyses, if needed, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of the United Nations system from a communications point of view.

III. WHY - Strategic objectives linked to the Cooperation Framework priorities

› What do you want to achieve?

- The communications strategy, in particular, should identify the needs and challenges in a country, prior to identifying results and impact.
- Outlines what the UNCG wants to achieve, in agreement with the UNCT, and ideally contain only a few key objectives in line with the Cooperation Framework priorities outcomes.
- Details objectives that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound, which are the five SMART criteria for setting objectives.
- UNCT vision in the next years (where we are and where we want to be), backed by perception surveys where available.

IV. WHO - Audiences: primary, secondary and influencers, as well as potential partners

› Whom are you addressing?

- Identifies the key audiences that the UNCT wants to reach. These audiences should be segmented, and specific messages formulated for each to maximize impact. Audience segmentation is often based on an analysis or survey that has been conducted.
- Considers a wide range of possible target audiences at the local, national, regional, and international levels. At the national level, target audiences may include people from the most vulnerable segments of the population, local grassroots partners, influencers, media, youth and women's networks, faith-based organizations, the private sector, government entities, UNCT counterparts, national employers', and workers' organizations. Regional and global partners might include foundations, international financial institutions, and donors. Distinguish between primary target audiences – those who hold the keys to the success of your objectives – and partners and influencers with whom you can collaborate to encourage broader audiences to take actions.



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V. WHAT - Common set of messages

› What will you say that will make people care and inspire action?

The UNCT is accountable for developing a core set of common messages and policy positions aligned with the Cooperation Framework. In line with the UN's Global Communications Strategy, we want to move beyond "public information" to make people care and inspire action for the SDGs (the umbrella of our Cooperation Frameworks). While these messages and policy positions differ depending on the country context and strategic priorities of the UNCT, they must be premised on the UN system's shared norms and standards. They should reflect an accurate analysis of the situation on the ground and contain constructive guidance on addressing country challenges. As such, they must be periodically revisited.

Key messages should be forward-looking and address issues of common concern to the agencies involved, keeping in mind the UN system's values, norms, and standards. Key messages often touch on cross-cutting issues, such as human rights, gender equality, environmental sustainability, and other issues that the national government or UNCT have identified as priorities.

Once established and agreed upon, common messages and policy positions can be used by any agency in their individual communications efforts. As agencies continue to carry out their own communications strategies and speak according to their specific mandates, it is essential that the overall messaging remains consistent and complementary, as the UN system must work together and talk together.

- Is based on Cooperation Framework priorities and global priorities, adapted to local contexts, and needs.
- Addresses issues of common concern to the agencies involved, keeping in mind the UN system's values, norms, and standards.

- Touches on cross-cutting issues linked to the SDGs, recovering together from COVID-19 better than "the old normal", including human rights, gender equality, environmental sustainability, capacity development and other priorities identified by the national government or UNCT.
- Varies depending on the intended target audience. Your communications must tell a convincing story that supports the communications objectives centred on the 3 Ws of communications: What, Why care, and What now- aimed to inspire people to care, and to mobilize them for action.
- This means that when drafting your key messages, the focus should be not only to gear people towards specific themes or priorities – it should be about how the message is communicated.
- Whether the focus is on human rights or gender equality, the message should be emotive, compelling and emphasizing the human dimension of the issue. Ultimately, we are trying to inspire people to care and act, rather than just providing them with information.

VI. HOW - Strategic approaches

› How will you reach your target audiences?

Countries should identify communication approaches that can help achieve the joint communications strategy's objectives. Strategic approaches focus on solutions and actions. For example, a country might use capacity-building and evidence-based communications to achieve shared objectives.

In some contexts, the communications strategy might focus on initiating or engaging in public discourse. This may include developing strategic networks and partnerships to leverage and amplify UN messaging, engaging in policy dialogue and/or building strategic partnerships with local communication specialists and organizations. These partners must share the United

Nations' values and might include, for example, media councils, national human rights institutions, and civil society groups.

Using a joint, issue-based communication approach (rather than an organization-based approach) can increase the reach and power of UN communications and enable the development of more robust, broad-based platforms, networks, or mobilization for change. This means we communicate together beyond specific UNCT members and towards joint UNCT priorities, inspiring people to care and take action.

It is helpful to specify the channels of communication/medium, such as public relations arrangements and social media outreach. This provides the UNCG with a list of options that can be effectively used to disseminate joint products, spread critical messages, and engage with public and policy audiences. The list of options can also include agency-specific communication channels, such as their social media outlets and websites. It is vital to address any digital divide with tailored initiatives, including innovative channels like mobile phone partnerships and verbal messages. UNCG is a critical group to support UNCTs to tackle the perils and challenges of the digital realm.

Consider using storytelling that centres on people (human angle) and tells of the results that UN programmes have achieved, so as to mobilize people to take action. The following are several types of strategic approaches.

→ **Community engagement:**
Engaging the public — especially influencers or community leaders — in a cause, usually to convince decision-makers to act. An example would be a campaign that advocates for services for survivors of gender-based violence.

Engaging with religious and community leaders to change social norms and behaviors on issues related to women's economic and social empowerment, including child marriage, family planning, girls' education, gender-based violence, and more.

→ **Social and behaviour-change communications:**
Engaging the public or specific segments thereof to change habits. An example would be

a campaign that encourages school children to wear masks and wash their hands frequently to avoid diseases.

- **Social media networks and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs):**
Using social media channels such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, and vocal and written SMS to share information and stories.
- **Media engagement or communications campaign:** Engaging with local, regional, and global news outlets, digital platforms, billboards, and other public venues to promote norms and values for social and behavioural change.

Joint activities, channels, and products

United Nations commemorative days and other special occasions provide opportunities to showcase and build support for the UN's work. The commemorative days could be used to emphasize priority themes and to amplify key messages. While each agency will continue to observe days relevant to its mandate, some other days could be celebrated jointly.

Campaigns on joint priorities (such as COVID-19 or climate action), joint websites and other communications products can help highlight the collaborative work of the UN development system in support of the host country. Other joint products are:

A. External communications

- Press releases, Op-ed
- Calendars of media and public events
- SDG editorial calendars and packages
- The annual United Nations Country Results Report
- Field missions for media
- Social media packages and social media live events
- Campaigns (multimedia, community-based)
- Electronic newsletters
- United Nations system information kits
- Social networks and forums
- Live conferences and events
- Exhibitions
- Webinars
- Branding

- Mobile Apps
- Surveys
- Blogs
- Digital signage
- Knowledge products
- Brochures and leaflets
- Video, audio, photo

B. Internal communications tools

- Intranet
- Mobile Apps
- Communication management (Trello)
- Tracking trends (Hootsuite)
- Surveys
- Forums, blogs
- Digital signage
- Newsletters
- Social media (Secretary-General policy on institutional use of social media)
- Communications Planning (Yammer, Teams, SharePoint)
- Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
- Rosters or Long-Term Agreements (LTAs)
- Monthly Calendar grid
- Make use of visually compelling Graphic design and Photographs
- Town hall meetings

C. Partnerships

Often the UN has limited “legs” to take you places. But you can find partners who can help take your messages further. Work with your RCO/UNCT members’ partnerships advisers on this.

- Partnership with media outlets (broadcasting, digital, print and audio news) and entertainment companies
- Partnership with community radios, especially to reach those further left behind like
- Partnership with businesses who can help deliver your message: mobile phone companies, public transportation and taxi companies, to name a few. Ensure businesses follow sustainability and human principles

- Partnership (often in programme countries pro-bono) with advertising agencies who can help you convey your message in a more compelling way, especially around campaigns where you want people to care and take action.

D. Crisis communications

In times of crisis, the UN system must respond with an even more coordinated approach to communications. In situations where more than one UN entity speaks out, the internal and external messaging must be consistent and complementary. For more information, see: Communicating together in times of crisis: Standard Operating Procedures for the UN system.

VII. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework

- Measures the outcomes of your communications by using the key performance indicators (KPIs) established at the start of the campaign. Measuring impact will enable you to identify areas for improvement, learn and adjust.
- May use data from UN Info as a critical accountability tool for the Cooperation Framework. In UNCT websites, the public can see which entities are working on which SDGs, where in the country they operate, as well as their sources of funding and their implementing partners.
- Following is a list of selected key performance indicators. You should choose the most relevant to the objectives you are trying to measure, and which are appropriate to the capacity of your team.
 - # of website users by location and age
 - Social media analytics
 - # of webinar views by key stakeholders as a % of overall views
 - # of event participants
 - # of event participants by gender and age, based on registration information

- # of newsletter readers (those who opened email)
- # of articles in top-tier media, per communications issue/campaign (e.g., SDGs, gender)
- # of articles with key-message pick-up per communications issue/campaign
- # of engagements (likes, shares, retweets, comments etc.) by social media channel and by issue
- # of times a hashtag is used.
- Compare your evidence-based performance with the previous month/with the same period last year to track if you are on the right track or if your communications plan should change.
- UNCT website analytics - Percentage of increase in your UNCT website views, time spent reading stories and others

VIII. Resources for Communications and Advocacy Activities

- Upon agreement of UNCT members, it is encouraged that necessary resources be allocated for UNCT advocacy and communications activities. This would normally happen under individual UNCT member's agency programmes but may also happen by pooling resources in the UNCT, if UNCT members voluntarily agree to this. Communicating Together recommends creating a coordination mechanism involving all UNCG members and relevant partners in assigning roles and responsibilities to implement the strategy. Each UNCG member (all communications officers in the UNCT) should have one goal in their performance document relating to UNCG work. This is to align our work to the SG's vision for communications as laid out in the UNDS reform. We also encourage UNCT and UNCG members to continue to learn about strategic communication and to participate in webinars and other training opportunities to enhance their skills.
- The Cooperation Framework should include a budget for communications, which would need to be reflected in the Funding Framework. Use the Cooperation Framework planning phase to allocate a budget and assess resources such as rosters, pools, long term agreements.

- Other documents should be shared and accessible across the UN agencies, in addition to an efficient back office. These documents and information can facilitate procurement services and access to human resources (including interns and volunteers) and event management and graphics services.

IX. Joint Communications Strategy implementation

- Details the timeline for roll-out of the annual communications plan and joint communications strategy, which in turn is connected to the Cooperation Framework outcomes.
- Outlines the UNCG coordination mechanism, including roles and responsibilities.
- Gives an overview of UNCT branding and mode of presentation.

X. Communicating results

The Annual UN Country Results Report is an opportunity for advocacy with many actors, such as governments, donors, community groups, etc. For more information, see the [Guidelines for Annual Results Reporting](#).

The UN Country Results Report should capture how the UN's work impacts people's lives, using clear language that can be easily understood by all. The recent UNCT Annual Results Reporting guideline is available and focuses heavily on the role of communicating the UNCT's results in a visually compelling way, fleshing out key information to be tailored to specific audiences through different channels. Make great use of data visualization too!



The United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) unites the 35 UN funds, programmes, specialized agencies, departments and offices that play a role in development.

At the country level, 130 UN Country Teams serving 162 countries and territories work together to increase the synergies and joint impact of the UN system.

The UN Development Coordination Office (DCO) serves as the secretariat for the UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) at the regional and global levels. DCO provides managerial and oversight functions for resident coordinators. Its activities are advanced through collective ownership by the UNSDG.

The Office acts as a key conduit for supporting the UN's activities for sustainable development, which inform policy, programme and operations on the ground.

For more information or queries, please contact:
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