

Protected Areas Resilient to Climate Change, PARCC West Africa



2011

Communication Strategy



ENGLISH



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The UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) was established in 2000 as the biodiversity assessment and policy implementation arm of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The roots of the organisation go back to 1979, when it was founded as the IUCN Conservation Monitoring Centre. We are the custodians of the World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA), a joint project with IUCN – The World Conservation Union and their World Commission on Protected Areas. The WDPA is the only global database of marine and terrestrial protected areas, comprising GIS spatial data and spatial attribute data, in existence. It is used to report the progress towards targets such as United Nations (UN) Millennium Development Goal 7, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), UN List of Protected Areas as well as providing support to policy and decision managers.



‘Communication strategy for the PARCC (Protected Areas Resilient to Climate Change) West Africa project’, prepared by Elise Belle, Programme Officer – Protected Areas Programme, with funding from Global Environment Facility (GEF) via UNEP.

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Executive Summary

The PARCC West Africa project, officially known as ‘Evolution of Protected Area Systems with Regard to Climate Change in the West Africa Region’, aims to help make protected areas more resilient to climate change. The general purpose of the communication strategy, based on the answers to the online questionnaire provided by the Project Steering Committee members, is to provide some general directions on communication for all project partners.

Given the large geographic scope of the project, 5 core countries in West Africa (Chad, Gambia, Mali, Sierra Leone, and Togo), and the number of partners involved, it is essential that an efficient communication strategy is designed early in the project. This document is based on the answers provided by the Project Steering Committee members to a questionnaire on the communication strategy.

It provides some guidelines on how communication should take place on the one hand amongst the partners involved in the project, and on the other hand towards external stakeholders and other interested parties.

After briefly explaining the aim of the strategy and its expected results, it focuses on identifying its audience in more detail, and then develops the strategy itself. A dual approach will be adopted whereby UNEP-WCMC will directly promote the project but also rely on the communication channels of its many partners to reach out to different stakeholders.

A number of communication tools will be produced throughout the course of the project, including a web site and data portal, which will be central to the communication between partners, and various materials to facilitate the transmission of information and results to a broader audience, including policy makers.

The message and branding strategy is also outlined, focusing on the need for all project documents to adopt the same format and logo. Finally, a monitoring system for all internal and external communications related to the project is defined.

1. Background

The project 'Evolution of Protected Area Systems with Regard to Climate Change in the West Africa Region' is a 5-year GEF project focusing on the issues of climate change and protected areas, of which UNEP-WCMC is the executing agency. The aim of the project is to help make protected areas more resilient to climate change. After consultation with the Project Steering Committee, the acronym of PARCC West Africa, for 'Protected Areas Resilient to Climate Change' and a logo were adopted. The name PARCC is therefore used throughout the document to refer to the project.

PARCC faces a number of communication challenges, including the geographic scale of the project, and the fact that the 5 countries at the core of the project do not share any border. The fact that the project activities will be carried out at different scales - at the national, regional and international level - by a number of partners, also means that effective communication will be crucial for the success of the project.

Furthermore, the project will involve the analysis of climate data, which is often complex, hard to understand, and can be difficult to interpret accurately. In West African countries, the issues associated with climate change are often not well understood and properly taken into account in protected areas management. Therefore, there is also a strong need to communicate ideas and results efficiently to a wide audience, including policy makers.

The communication strategy for the project was developed based on the answers provided by the Project Steering Committee members to an online questionnaire. The averaged scores obtained for some specific questions are presented in brackets in the text. The questionnaire and a summary of the answers given can be found in Annex 1.

It is centred on several practical components, namely the project website, data portal and online mapping tool. In addition, PARCC will also build on the experience and communication tools already developed by its partners to create an efficient communication framework.

2. Aim and expected outcomes

The communication strategy will be central to the project and its most important objective, as defined in the questionnaire, is to 'ensure effective collaboration between all project partners throughout the duration of the project' (5/6 respondents). In addition, it will also 'detail the way communication should take place with all the project's external stakeholders' (2/6 respondents, one respondent having chosen both answers).

In the short run, over the duration of the project, the communication strategy is expected to result in:

- Better interactions between all stakeholders, including academics, climate institutions, conservation practitioners and policy makers.

- Improved management of data and information related to climate change and protected areas in the region.
- The use of the results of the PARCC project in the design of new policies for protected areas which appropriately take into account the effect of climate change.

In the long term, the communication strategy needs to result in changes in behaviour, discourse, policy, development and management trends. It should also generate interest among a broader circle of stakeholders, who would be willing to either join the initiative, or replicate the project in other parts of the world.

3. Audience

The PARCC project and its associated communication tools will involve a great variety of stakeholders, in order of importance as defined in the questionnaire (on a scale from 1, least important, to 10, most important):

- The national government of the 5 core countries (Togo, Chad, Sierra Leone, Mali and The Gambia), 3 additional countries (Ghana, Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire) for the transboundary aspects, and possibly other governments in West Africa and beyond. (Average score=9.0)
- Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs): Birdlife and IUCN (PAPACO and Species Programme), the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone and other local NGOs. (Average score=8.7)
- UNEP-WCMC, as the executing agency and the Secretariat to the Project Steering Committee (PSC). (Average score=8.2)
- Meteorological institutions: Met Office Hadley Centre (UK), AGHRYMET, the African Centre for Meteorological Application for Development (ACMAD), and national meteorological stations. (Average score=7.6)
- UNEP DEPI/GEF, as the implementing agency of the project. (Average score=7.5)
- National experts and consultants to work alongside international experts under each theme identified (climate change, protected areas, species distribution, vegetation and fire). (Average score=6.5)
- The Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS). (Average score=6.2)
- Academic institutions: from the UK (Durham University and DICE University of Kent) and local universities from at least the 5 core countries. (Average score=6.2)
- The Technical Advisory Group (TAG) chaired by the lead consultant scientist, Dr Neil Burgess. (Average score=6.2)

The communication strategy will focus on:

- a) Assisting internal communication amongst the project partners, and

b) Promoting the dissemination of the project outputs externally to:

- i. Other national and international environmental NGOs,
- ii. UN agencies (UNEP, UNDP),
- iii. The scientific community (through the publication of peer-reviewed articles),
- iv. Local and regional media to publicise the results of the project,
- v. Natural resources based businesses (such as agriculture, fishing, and forestry)
- vi. Financial institutions (World Bank and African Development Bank)
- vii. The Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS)

4. Strategic approach

As the executing agency and the Secretariat to the Project Steering Committee (PSC), UNEP-WCMC is not in the position to directly enforce the creation and implementation of new policies taking into account the effect of climate change on protected areas. However, it is ideally placed to organize, analyse and synthesize information coming from a variety of sources. The information can then be used by the different stakeholders to achieve a variety of objectives such as the development of new policies by decision makers, or the publication of peer-reviewed articles by academics.

A dual approach will therefore be adopted, as preferred by the great majority of respondents to the online questionnaire (5/6 respondents), where ‘both UNEP-WCMC and the project partners will disseminate the results of the projects as widely as possible to all interested individuals and institutions’. It will therefore consist in:

1. Directly promoting the PARCC project and its outputs by:

- Giving the project a specific and easily recognisable identity through the design of a project logo and appropriate branding (as described below).
- Consultations with a wide variety of stakeholders throughout the duration of the project, taking into account their particular needs, and describing the aim of the project, how it could help, and its importance for the region.
- Attending workshops and conferences in the UK, in the West Africa region, and beyond.

2. Relying on our wide variety of partners to reach out to other relevant stakeholders.

- UNEP-WCMC will facilitate the communication and coordination of the project activities between partners and ensure that the information and results produced by the PARCC project are scientifically robust, with the technical guidance of the TAG chair.
- We will ensure that partners can use the results of the project freely in their outreach activities (e.g. in official reports to governments or peer-reviewed publications) without affecting the legitimacy of PARCC as a source. This will require partners to agree on clear rules for the use of the project outputs.

5. Activities and tools

Carefully considered communications products will play a very important role in assisting with effective internal communication, and in disseminating the results of the project externally through the use of well-targeted products which will ensure that key messages are adequately conveyed. In particular, it is important that communication conveys the importance of the project in providing information that will enable the development of relevant national policies.

Internal communication amongst project partners

The communication between all the project partners will be facilitated by the development of the following tools, which on average were all listed with an average score of 3 or more in the questionnaire (3 and 4 being Important and Very important, respectively):

- The project website is central to the exchange of all knowledge, information and outputs generated by the project. All outputs from the project are made available through the website. It includes (or will include) sections on archival stores of project communications, project reports, work plans and timetables, data and information collected or generated during activities including training materials. It also has a page providing detailed contact information of all project participants, as well as links to other relevant external resources. The current website which was developed in-house by UNEP-WCMC is already available at the following address <http://ccpawa.demoapps.unep-wcmc.org/>. It will soon be upgraded to a better website (with a different, easier to memorise, domain name), which will be created by professionals. (Average score=3.2)
- The data portal will be part of the project website. The portal will be central to data management and analysis activities. It will allow all project participants to upload and download data and information (such as PA boundaries, species distributions, as well as national boundaries, and other base layers necessary for map production). At present, only a basic data portal is active and populated with a number of documents related to the project, but documents can only be uploaded by UNEP-WCMC. This will soon be modified with the creation of the new website, to allow all project participants to share data in a user-friendly interface. (Average score=3.0)
- An online mapping tool will be integrated to the project website (currently only a short online demonstration video is available). This tool will allow users to easily put together a wide range of outputs based on the information collected through the project, and possibly explore different climate change scenarios and their impact on the protected area network of the country or region of interest. It will therefore contribute to the sustainability of the project outputs, as well as simplifying replication elsewhere in Africa or beyond. (Average score=3.0)
- Reports: meeting reports, produced bilingually in English and French, and other relevant reports will be distributed to all project participants. (Average score=3.5)
- Large maps (in A0 format) of protected areas in West Africa have already been created and will be distributed to all country representatives at the national data collection workshops. In addition, maps will be created throughout the course of the project for each participating country. (Average score=3.3)

Dissemination of the project outputs

In order to disseminate the results of the project to external stakeholders and interested parties, a number of communication tools will be used. The following ones have been listed with an average score of 3 or more in the questionnaire:

- The project website, mainly aimed at communication between the project partners will also showcase the main outputs of the project for a wider audience. Once the new website is created, it will use a more memorable domain name. (Average score=3.7)
- Relevant reports and publications will be distributed as widely as possible, including to academic institutions, environmental NGOs, UN agencies, and the academic community. In addition, summaries of reports will be distributed to PA managers and planners, policy makers, decision makers and economists, as and when appropriate. (Average score=3.5)
- In order to promote the adoption of the methodologies and tools developed during the project, a set of guidelines for protected area managers on the best approaches to manage for climate change will be developed and published as “guidelines for PA managers: the best approaches to manage protected areas for climate change” at the end of the project. (Average score=3.0)
- The final regional meeting, co-organised by IUCN PAPACO, BirdLife Africa Secretariat and UNEP-WCMC, will be centred on policy and outreach and aimed at attracting a wider audience, including all international, regional and national partners, but also representatives from the political sphere, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). (Average score=3.2)
- Yearly newsletters outlining the main outputs of the project will be produced by IUCN PAPACO. In addition, contacts with other organisations will be explored to possibly promote the project in their publications. (Average score=3.0)

In addition, the following tools, which have been listed with an average score of less than 3 in the questionnaire:

- A mailing list will be created to keep all participants, but also individuals having an interest in the project. Regular news about the project will then be sent quarterly to keep all interested parties updated about the project activities and outputs. (Average score=2.8)
- When possible, presentations will be delivered by UNEP-WCMC at the main relevant international conferences and meetings (e.g. CBD Conference of the Parties, CBD Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA), IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change) with the purpose of gaining visibility for the project. (Average score=2.8)
- Press briefings and releases will be arranged by UNEP-WCMC when the opportunities arise. (Average score=2.8)

Finally, a brochure and other materials that partners can use in their outreach activities, including products tailored for their main audiences (international organizations, civil society organizations, business/industry and media) will be produced. It will include:

- A simple *brochure* with basic information on the project, which will be updated as the project advances and distributed to all relevant stakeholders throughout the course of the project.
- A collection of *PowerPoint slides* to be used by partners to explain the project.
- Accessible *maps, diagrams, graphics and tables* that can be used in multiple media. These products will be used to convey more concisely and efficiently the aims of the project (or one of its components).
- *Concept notes* to develop ideas of new initiatives which could be associated with the PARCC project.
- *A series of posters* describing the project, its aim and outputs.

All communication materials will be made available bilingually, in English and French, and will adopt the same look to convey a project image or ‘brand’, as described in the section below.

In addition, UNEP-WCMC will also receive input from all project participants to ensure that that its communication is successful, and to broaden its audience. This will be done at each meeting of the Project Steering Committee, when members will be invited to review and discuss the communication strategy and outputs. This will be especially important towards the end of the project, when interactions with other members of the community, such as policy makers and protected area managers, will be enhanced.

The information and communication products created by UNEP-WCMC will be handed to all project partners in formats that they can use to deliver to other relevant stakeholders; and partners will use their established channels (such as publications, newsletters, presentations at conferences, or websites) to disseminate them.

6. Message and branding

Message

To frame its messages, UNEP-WCMC will use existing projects and material to make biodiversity and climate change data less complex, more understandable, and easier to relate to concrete policy issues.

With a clear articulation of the need to take into account the impact of climate change in the management of protected area networks, the project will develop the content of its communication efforts around:

- A clear, compelling articulation of the challenges and problems faced by protected areas in the context of climate change.
- What is the PARCC project? How will it address these issues?
- What will be the direct benefits for the countries?

The PARCC project also needs to develop a positioning statement that describes very briefly its profile to be used in communication material. The statement should highlight its target audience, its frame of reference and the features that set its products apart. As chosen in the questionnaire, the PARCC project's vision will be defined as follows: 'PARCC West Africa builds capacity in the region to better integrate the likely effect of climate change on protected areas, and develop new management approaches' (4/6 respondents).

Branding

It is essential that all communication products adopt the same look to convey the project brand. In order to do so the following guidelines should be adhered to:

- The project logo was adopted by the members of the PSC who responded to the online questionnaire with an overwhelming majority (5/6) and was refined according to the comments received. It should feature prominently on all communication products. Logos of the funder (GEF) and executing agency (UNEP-WCMC) should also feature on all products.
- The colour scheme should complement the project logo and be consistent across products.
- Where possible, images should be used to help visualise the links between protected areas and climate change, and an optimistic and positive outlook will be sought.
- Infographics and symbols will be produced in the same style and format for consistency in the look of all products.
- Once decided upon, font types should be kept consistent between products.

Furthermore, to ensure that the PARCC project brand is consistently used by all project participants, it is important to ensure that this brand does not compete with partners' brands but rather provides an opportunity for partners to cooperate. The PARCC brand should signal 'high quality' to external stakeholders. One source of strength for the brand will also come from its partners' names. The PARCC project should therefore brand its products as a seal of quality. In addition, the project name PARCC, Protected Areas Resilient to Climate Change, makes the project potentially replicable in other parts of the world.

Initially, it is recommended to list partners as much as possible whenever the brand is used and have partners with established names promote the recognition of the project by mentioning it in their relevant communication. For example, a map or graph developed by partner X in the context of the project could be branded 'X, Member of the PARCC project' or 'Developed by X for the PARCC project', and accompany the graphic with a small footnote describing the project.

7. Monitoring

Because the project communication will partly rely on outreach by partners, it is important to establish early on a monitoring system that informs the executing agency of the effectiveness of communication activities and modify them accordingly, if necessary.

UNEP-WCMC will monitor both the internal and external flow of communication; the former, to ensure that partners are well informed, engaged and able to perform the communication activities

as agreed; the latter, to ensure that the information is well received by external stakeholders, such as policy makers.

UNEP-WCMC will develop monitoring tools (such as online surveys) in collaboration with partners in order to facilitate the gathering of standardized information from partners. The monitoring strategy will consist in the following:

- The monitoring tool for internal communications will allow the assessment of partners' levels of information about progress in the project, levels of participation in the implementation of project communication activities, and perception of benefits derived from the project.
- For external communications, the monitoring tool will help to assess progress towards achieving goals and communication outputs. Some examples of indicators that could be considered include the Number of documents downloaded from the project website, Number of users of the online mapping tool, Number of citations in publications and reports, and in the longer term, Number of decisions adopted with regards to protected areas which make reference to the PARCC project. Once the final project website is created, these statistics will be compiled every three months.

Annex 1. Questionnaire on the project's communication strategy

The answers to the online questionnaire are summarized below in brackets in italics.

1. What do you think should be the main objective(s) of the project's communication strategy?
Please select all the answers that apply.
 - Ensure an effective collaboration between all project partners throughout the duration of the project (*4/6 respondents*)
 - Detail the way communication should take place with all the project's external stakeholders (*2/6 respondents*)
 - Guide the development of the tools and other practical components associated with the project (*0/6 respondents*)
 - Other (please specify): _____
2. How important do you think the following partners and stakeholders are to ensure an efficient communication of the projects' outputs? Please rank them from 1 (most important) to 10 (less important):
 - National governments (*Total = 54, 6 respondents*)
 - Academic institutions (e.g. Durham university, DICE University of Kent, local universities) (*Total = 37, 6 respondents*)
 - Meteorological institutions (e.g. AGHRYMET, ACMAD, national stations) (*Total = 38, 6 respondents*)
 - Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs, e.g. BirdLife, IUCN, CSSL) (*Total = 52, 6 respondents*)
 - National experts and consultants (*Total = 39, 6 respondents*)
 - Technical Advisory Group (TAG) (*Total = 31, 5 respondents*)
 - Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (*Total = 37, 6 respondents*)
 - UNEP-WCMC (*Total = 49, 6 respondents*)
 - UNEP DEPI/GEF (*Total = 45, 6 respondents*)
 - Other (please specify): _____
3. What do you think would be the best approach for the project's communication strategy?
Please choose only one answer.
 - The project partners should promote the project to the relevant stakeholders through their own communication and outreach activities. (*0/6 respondents*)
 - UNEP-WCMC, as the executing agency, should directly promote the project externally by giving the project a specific identity and through consultations and workshops with stakeholders. (*1/6 respondents*)
 - Both UNEP-WCMC and the project partners should disseminate the results of the projects as widely as possible to all interested individuals and institutions. (*5/6 respondents*)
 - Other (please specify): _____
4. What do you think would be the most useful *internal* communication tools amongst project partners? Please rate each one from 1 (very important) to 4 (not important):
 - Project website (*Total = 19, 6 respondents*)

- Data portal (*Total = 18, 6 respondents*)
 - Online mapping tool (*Total = 18, 6 respondents*)
 - Reports (*Total = 21, 6 respondents*)
 - Maps (*Total = 20, 6 respondents*)
 - Other (please specify): _____
5. What do you think would be the most useful *external* communication tools to disseminate the results of the project? Please rate each one from 1 (very important) to 4 (not important):
- Mailing list (*Total = 14, 5 respondents*)
 - Project website (*Total = 22, 6 respondents*)
 - Reports and publications (*Total = 21, 6 respondents*)
 - Guidelines for protected area managers (*Total = 18, 6 respondents*)
 - Final regional meeting (policy and outreach) (*Total = 19, 6 respondents*)
 - International conferences (*Total = 17, 6 respondents*)
 - Project newsletter (*Total = 18, 6 respondents*)
 - Press briefings and releases (*Total = 17, 6 respondents*)
 - Other (please specify): _____
6. Which of these three statements do you think reflects best the vision of the project?
- “PARCC West Africa helps design protected area networks able to adapt to climate change in West Africa” (*2/6 respondents*)
 - “PARCC West Africa undertakes new research to better understand the links between climate change and protected areas in western Africa” (*0/6 respondents*)
 - “PARCC West Africa builds capacity in the region to better integrate how climate change is likely to affect protected areas and develop new management approaches” (*4/6 respondents*)
 - Other (please specify): _____
- 7.



Logo A (*1/6 respondents*)



Logo B (*5/6 respondents*)



Logo C (*0/6 respondents*)

Which one of the three logos above do you prefer? Thinking about the message you would like the logo to convey. Please rank them in your order of preference (keeping in mind that minor amendments to the colours and fonts can still be made). Note also that an English version of the logo will also be created (i.e. ‘PARCC West Africa’).

8. If you have any other additional comments to make relative to this questionnaire, please provide them below.