Integrated Programme for Better Air Quality in Asia (IBAQ Programme)

CITY SOLUTIONS TOOLKIT:

COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING FOR CITIES

THE SITUATION

Air quality communications will help people understand the problems and the issues involved, the pressing need for solutions, the overall mitigation process, and the benefits and co-benefits of proposed solutions, which will help to bolster broader public buy-in. Communications will also enable governments to demonstrate impact and results, which in turn will strengthen support for the mitigation policies actions being undertaken.

Communicating effectively about air quality is an important and multifaceted task, and an integral component of cities' air quality management (AQM) system. Ineffective communication denies the public the ability to make informed life, behavioral and electoral choices, and compromises their role as informed citizens capable of independently contributing to emissions reductions. Helping people understand the sources and implications of air pollution and the impacts of mitigation measures and policies, as well as the direct benefits and co-benefits of individual behavioral change, can lead to better health, social, economic and environmental outcomes, and help to strengthen democratic processes through improved citizen engagement.

However, recent episodes of extreme air pollution in many cities in Asia have highlighted the difficulties facing city officials in effectively communicating to the public about air quality, mitigation and policy measures, health impacts and protection, and preventive strategies. The challenges are common to many city governments throughout Asia, with gaps evident in local government communications capacity, messaging, and information dissemination - particularly for those most vulnerable and at risk - that have the potential to hinder the overall effectiveness of broader municipal air quality management efforts.

The common challenges being faced include:

• A lack of awareness about the importance and necessity of air quality communication;
• Over-reliance on the dissemination of technical air quality data without the provision of supporting information on what that data means, relevant policies, mitigation efforts, health impacts and protection, prevention strategies, and individual responsibility;
• An inability to respond to the public's air quality communications needs and priorities;

• The adoption of one-size-fits-all communications approaches that may not correspond with the public demand for information and that may not reach the intended or required target groups;
• A lack of communications capacity and sufficiently trained staff;
• A lack of coordination and differing priorities among government departments and agencies; and
• Insufficient local government budget allocations for communications.

With air pollution being the world's leading environmental health risk, costing millions of lives each year, and with Asia disproportionately bearing the brunt of the health and mortality impacts, there is hence a pressing need to improve the capacity of city government officials throughout the region to communicate about air quality issues, particularly in terms of how to more clearly elaborate the risks of air pollution, how to more closely engage the public in air pollution issues, and how to more effectively produce sustainable changes in individuals' and stakeholders' habits and behaviors.

This module seeks to address those challenges and provide communications planning guidance for city governments and air quality practitioners to support broader AQM efforts and the implementation of mitigation measures.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The participation of stakeholders in government's AQM efforts - the key groups that will be involved, including those directly and indirectly involved, and those who may or will be affected by the prescribed mitigation actions - is vital in ensuring broader public buy-in and more effective overall implementation of mitigation policies and initiatives.

Eliciting stakeholder support requires targeted air quality communications that foster an understanding of the relevance and impacts of the measures being undertaken in their daily lives, and help raise awareness of cities' air quality status, change public attitudes, and promote more sustainable practices and behaviors.

Effective stakeholder engagement will:

• Build consensus on mitigation solutions and help develop a shared vision for the future.
• Ensure the needs of different stakeholder groups are heard, reflected, and met.
• Address potential stakeholder risks and improve their buy-in.
• Enable different stakeholders to better understand each other's position and viewpoints, which in turn will result in better and more inclusive air quality management outcomes.
• Ensure there is clarity on expectations, and stakeholders' roles and responsibilities in cities' air quality management.
• Ensure AQM processes are genuinely participatory and democratic.

Effective stakeholder engagement also helps to lessen misgivings, opposition and resistance from different sectors and groups based on their perception of the potential impacts of mitigation measures on their operations, business practices, established protocols, and livelihoods. Information, education and communication campaigns that highlight the economic and health co-benefits of AQM can help increase acceptance among stakeholders and provide a platform for the open exchange of information.

The city focal point for communications planning can start by mapping the appropriate stakeholder groups to work with. Stakeholders can be classified according to their required level of support needed to ensure successful mitigation efforts, and their level of influence in determining successful implementation:

High support, low influence	High support, high influence
These stakeholders can contribute a lot to the implementation of the project and are highly engaged, but they may have low or a lack of influence on mitigation outcomes	These are the key stakeholders. They exert a lot of effort, are highly engaged, and have a substantial influence on mitigation outcomes
Low support, low influence	**Low support, high influence**
These stakeholders are neither interested nor have influence, and can be resistant to mitigation efforts	These stakeholders have a substantial influence on the mitigation efforts but minimal to no resources to contribute to implementation

Table 1 below provides a template which city stakeholders could use for stakeholder engagement planning.

Table 1: Stakeholder engagement planning

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLANNING

Who do you need to engage with, and enlist support from, in the development and implementation of the communications plan? *For example, governments and government agencies at all levels, NGOs, media, industry representatives, business owners, transport groups, commuters, vehicle owners, citizens' groups, civil society organizations, community-based organizations?*	
What barriers or challenges, real or potential, exist that may hinder the	

participation or buy-in of the different stakeholder groups?	
What will need to be done to address those barriers or challenges?	
What role will each stakeholder play?	
Who will be tasked with stakeholder outreach and engagement?	
How will those identified stakeholders be reached, and what will be the frequency of communication/consultation?	
In relation to the air quality issues being addressed, what is the level of relevant knowledge of each of the stakeholder groups?	
What sort of information/materials, resources and support do each of those stakeholders need?	
How will the stakeholders' viewpoints and specific interests/concerns be incorporated and reflected in communications?	
What is the best way to reach each of those stakeholders with information/messages?	
What grievance mechanisms need to be developed to provide redress for stakeholders in the event of conflict or complaints? **Who will be tasked with overseeing these mechanisms?**	

What reporting and monitoring mechanisms will be developed to ensure the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement? **What will be the frequency of reporting?** **How will reports be disseminated?** **What feedback mechanisms will be established?**	

SYNERGIES/OTHER ALIGNMENTS

In addition to stakeholder engagement, synergies with other organizations, community groups, youth groups, social movements and events/activities will be capitalized on to improve communications outreach and help build a broader audience

What other organizations, groups, social movements or events/activities can you align with to improve outreach and build a broader audience?	
What role will they play?	
What is the best way to reach people involved in those other groups?	
What sort of information/materials do these groups need to ensure messages are spread, and are spread accurately?	
Who will be tasked with outreach and engagement for these groups?	

COMMUNICATIONS PLANS

The key steps in the development of communications plans are as follows:

Identification: Identification of key communications challenges and impediments, the availability of local government resources, levels of staff knowledge, the content of current air quality information and avenues of dissemination, existing communications strategies, and types of public outreach.

Feedback: Feedback from the public to identify the diverse needs of different population groups, particularly those most vulnerable and at risk, identification of the most appropriate channels and mediums to receive information, perceived gaps in city governments' air quality communications, and the types of air quality information being sought.

Strategy development: The development of long-term multi-faceted, multi-modal communications plans that impart information on air quality and government responses, and that more effectively respond to public needs and priorities in a manner that is both easy to understand and relevant for intended audiences, and that will stimulate public engagement and motivate individuals and stakeholder groups to become agents of change.

Communications plans detail what cities are trying to achieve, who will be targeted and how they will be targeted, the messages to be disseminated, and the channels to be used to reach those target audiences. They are focused on raising awareness, encouraging stakeholder participation, changing attitudes, behaviors and practices, informing the development of effective mitigation strategies, actions and policies, and ultimately providing the foundation for the communications components of cities' Clean Air Action Plans. They feature clear institutional frameworks and responsibilities, and mechanisms for stakeholder coordination and engagement, public awareness-raising, resource allocation, and monitoring and evaluation to determine progress against overall objectives.

Communications plan components (Table 2) include:

Objectives: A clearly defined elaboration of the desired objectives and expected outcomes of the communications plan.

Messages: What will be said and how it will be said.

Key stakeholders: Identification of key stakeholders, how they will be engaged, and how they will be involved.

Synergies: Identification of other organizations, social movements and events that can be aligned with in order to improve outreach and build a broader audience.

Target groups: Identification of the key groups to be targeted, and how they will be targeted.

Challenges: Existing and potential communications-related challenges and how those challenges will be addressed.

Risk assessment: Identification of possible risks, and risk mitigation strategies.

Communication channels and frequency: What channels will be used to reach target audiences and the frequency of dissemination.

Materials and activities: What informational and promotional materials will be produced, and what activities will be held.

Budget: The costs involved in the development and implementation of the communications plan.

Available resources: The resources that are available and will be used to develop and implement the communications campaign.

Roles and responsibilities: Designated roles, tasks and responsibilities.

Time frame and roll-out: The time frame for the development and implementation of the communications plan, and how it will be rolled out over time to ensure momentum and continued progression.

Monitoring and evaluation: How the communications plan will be monitored over time, and its effectiveness evaluated.

Expected outcomes from properly developed and implemented communications plans include: Better-informed citizenry; improved public understanding of the sources of air pollution and air quality data, government policies and mitigation efforts, health impacts and preventive actions, and the need for individual behavioral change; and the public playing a key role in adopting and implementing actions aimed at improving air quality, with commensurate longer-term improvements in overall air quality and human and environmental health.

Table 2: Communications plan components

COMPONENTS

OBJECTIVES	• What is it hoped that the communications plan will achieve in the city? • What is the vision? • Is the intention to broadly raise public awareness, elicit changes in people's attitudes and behaviors, changes in patterns of consumption, changes in industry practice, influence policy change?
MESSAGES	• What do you want to tell people? • What do you want them to know? • What do you want them to do? • What are you asking of them? • Are your messages reflecting your objectives?
KEY STAKEHOLDERS	• Who do you need to engage with and enlist support from in the development and implementation of the communications plan? Governments and government agencies at all levels, media, industry representatives, business owners, transport groups, commuters, vehicle owners? • How will those stakeholders be engaged and involved?
SYNERGIES	• What organizations, social movements or events can you align with to improve outreach and build a broader audience?

TARGET GROUPS	• Who is the communications plan targeting? • What are you trying to achieve with each identified target audience? • What do they need to know in order to achieve the objectives of the communications plan? • What do they need to do in order to achieve the objectives of the communications plan? • What level of knowledge and understanding do they already have? • Have the needs of vulnerable and at-risk groups been taken into consideration?
CHALLENGES	• What communications-related challenges are you facing in developing and implementing the communications plan? Human resources, levels of knowledge, technical capacity, inadequate funding? • How will you address gaps and shortfalls that may impede the development and/or implementation of the communications plan or impact on its overall effectiveness? • Are there other potential external challenges that may impact on the implementation of the communications plan? And if so, how will those challenges be addressed?
RISK ASSESSMENT	• What risks are there? These include issues such as the communications plan being negatively received or perceived, and people reacting negatively to being asked to make changes. • Have you developed a risk assessment and mitigation plan? • What do you need to do to ensure your communications plan is credible, accepted and effective?
COMMUNICATION CHANNELS AND FREQUENCY	• How will you reach your identified target audiences? • What are the most effective channels of communication to disseminate information? What forms will information take? • How often will information be disseminated?
MATERIALS AND ACTIVITIES	• What informational and/or promotional material will be produced and what activities/events will be held? • Where and how will material be distributed? • Where and when will events be held and how will they be publicized?
BUDGET	• What budget do you need for the development and implementation of the communications plan? • What is budget breakdown for the different components of the communications plan? • Is the budget sufficient to ensure the communications plan will be effective and have the desired outcomes?
AVAILABLE RESOURCES	• What resources are available to you to implement the communications plan? • Are additional resources required? If so, how will those resources be procured? • What can be produced internally, and what will need to be done externally?

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	• Who will do what, and what will their specific tasks be? • Is there a sufficient number of people assigned for the duration of the communications plan?
TIME FRAME AND ROLL-OUT	• What is the overall time frame for the development and implementation of the communications plan? • Is the time frame sufficient to ensure that objectives will be met? If not, what adjustments need to be made? • Within the overall time frame, have short and medium-term points been identified for the purposes of monitoring and evaluation? • How will the communications plan be rolled out over time to ensure momentum and continued progression?
MONITORING AND EVALUATION	• How will progress be monitored and evaluated over time - short, medium and long term? • How will your monitoring be used to guide and improve planning? • What indicators will be used to track progress? • Have the objectives of the campaign been met? • If sufficient progress toward achieving objectives has not been made, what provisions are there for adjustments or changes to ensure success?

When designing communications plans, it's important to understand that knowledge alone doesn't necessarily lead to action. Understanding why target audiences do or don't take action is central to communications planning, and will guide the development of objectives, messaging and outreach strategies.

Objectives are the anticipated effects of communications plans, and they should indicate the desired changes in knowledge, attitudes and practices/behaviors among target audiences that will ensue as a result of the implementation of the plan. Essentially, they identify how behaviors will develop or change, to what extent, and over what period of time.

Objectives should be **SMART**:

Specific: The objectives should clearly define the expected outcomes and should answer questions such as Who? What? Where? Why? How? Specific objectives help define the subsequent communication activities to be undertaken.

Measurable: The objectives should include indicators of progress and should answer questions such as how often or how much. This will determine whether the objectives are achieved.

Attainable: The expected changes defined in the objectives should be realistic within the given timeframe and with the available resources.

Relevant: The objectives should contribute to achieving the overall mitigation goals.

Time-bound: The objectives should include a timeframe for achieving the desired changes.

The clarification and elaboration of objectives will in turn guide the development of messaging for target audiences. This covers what will be said and how it will be said, and includes:

- What do you want to tell people?
- What do you want them to know?
- What do you want them to do?
- What are you asking of them?

It is also important to ensure there is sufficient budget allocated for the implementation of communications plans. Resources will need to be allocated to seven major areas:

1. Research

2. Training/capacity-building

3. Development and production of print materials

4. Development and production of broadcast materials

5. Special events

6. Local planning and coordination meetings

7. Monitoring and evaluation

Measurable benchmarks need to be set to evaluate the progress being made in achieving the communications objectives. Monitoring ("what" is happening) and evaluation ("why" it is happening) improve the effectiveness of communications and ensures that messages are resonating with, and influencing, target audiences. It covers:

- How progress will be monitored and evaluated over time - short, medium and long term.
- How monitoring will be used to guide and improve planning
- The indicators that will be used to track progress
- Determining if the communications objectives have been met.
- Provisions for adjustments or changes to communications plans to ensure success if benchmarks have not been reached.

While both monitoring and evaluation measure results, monitoring should track inputs, outputs and intermediate outcomes so that adjustments can be made to communications plans during implementation. Evaluation is a more comprehensive analysis of why desired objectives are or are not being achieved. This is done via both quantitative and qualitative indicators.

Examples of quantitative indicators:

- Number of communications materials distributed
- Number of radio/television/newspaper articles and/or advertisements broadcast/published
- Number of people trained
- Social media and website metrics and analytics

Examples of qualitative indicators:

- Baseline surveys on attitudes, knowledge and practices
- Stakeholder feedback

COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES FOR CITIES

Several key challenges currently exist in Asia that prevent the effective communication of air quality information. These fall under three broad headings:

Institutional:

• Limited capacity in processing AQ information: Where air quality data is available, there may not be in-house capacity to use this data and develop awareness-raising programs to target different stakeholder groups.

Management/technical:

• Limited dissemination and coverage of air quality information: The availability of air quality data may be limited. If data is available, its scope, type and frequency may be restricted to certain cities/countries.

• Differences in air quality indices may lead to public confusion: Differences between the air quality indices used by cities/regions and countries may cause the public to misinterpret the situation and reduce the impact of initiatives to reduce air pollution.

• Limited public guidance on air pollution episodes: Information on what the public should do to reduce exposure and emissions in a severe air pollution event may be unavailable.

• Limited influence of air quality communications on attitudes and behavior: Where public information is available, it may not be sufficiently developed to influence the attitudes and behaviors of different target audiences to reduce emissions and health impacts. This could be partly due to a poor understanding among influential groups, such as the media and civil society, of air pollution issues.

Financial:

• Limited availability of financial resources for air quality communication: Communication may be considered less important than identifying air pollution sources, determining the status of air quality, and assessing its impact on human health and wellbeing. However, in order to reduce pollution and protect public health, the communication of air pollution information should be seen as a key component of effective air quality management.

ASSESSMENT OF CITIES' COMMUNICATION CAPACITY

To enable a city to effectively communicate air quality information, it needs to develop and implement communication strategies, ensure availability of and access to air quality information to stakeholders, and promote the proper the use of appropriate communication platforms. Table 3 below outlines key indicators to help in assessing a city's capacity on air quality communication.

Instructions: For each row, check the indicator that best describes the condition of air quality communication in your city per category. Count the number of checks per stage. The column with the highest total is the stage of your city on air quality communication based on this initial assessment. Knowing your city's status will help you determine the next steps for improving your current capacity and addressing challenges your city may be facing. This can be done through the Roadmap for Air Quality Communication (Table 4).

Table 3: Assessing cities' air quality communications capacity

Indicator categories	Stages				
	Underdeveloped	Developing	Emerging	Maturing	Fully developed
Communication objectives	☐ Limited or no communication activities are conducted	☐ Communication activities are performed to provide air quality (AQ) information to the public and stakeholders	Communication activities are performed to ☐ provide AQ information to the public and stakeholders ☐ enable understanding of AQ issues ☐ solicit cooperation in AQ management programs ☐ obtain stakeholder input during formulation of AQ management	Communication activities are performed to ☐ provide AQ information ☐ enable understanding of AQ issues ☐ solicit cooperation in AQ programs ☐ obtain stakeholder input during formulation of AQ management activities/ programs ☐ achieve	Communication activities are performed to ☐ provide AQ information ☐ enable understanding of AQ issues ☐ solicit cooperation ☐ obtain input during program formulation ☐ achieve behavioral change and active collaboration

			☐ activities/ programs ☐ achieve behavioral change and active collaboration with stakeholders on implementation of action plan	behavioral change and active collaboration with stakeholders on implementation of action plan	with stakeholders on implementation of action plan
Development of communication strategies	☐ There are no communication strategies in place	☐ Communication activities for policymakers are implemented on an ad hoc or project basis ☐ Communication activities for public are implemented on an ad hoc or project basis	☐ Communication activities for policymakers are regularly implemented ☐ Communication activities for public are regularly implemented	☐ Communication strategies[1] for policymakers are developed and implemented ☐ Communication strategies for public are developed and implemented	☐ Communication strategies for policymakers are fully implemented and effectiveness regularly reviewed ☐ Communication strategies for public are fully implemented and effectiveness regularly reviewed
Types of information communicated	☐ AQ monitoring data is not communicated	☐ Limited AQ data (raw/processed) from ad hoc or project-based monitoring activities are used in communication activities ☐ Information available is dated/ not updated	☐ Raw and processed AQ monitoring data, general information on pollution sources are used in communication activities ☐ Air quality information available is updated ☐ Reports on the state of air quality are issued on a case-to-case basis	☐ Raw and processed AQ monitoring data, Air Quality Index (AQI), information on pollution sources from EI/SA, local data on impacts of air pollution and AQ management action plans are used in communication activities ☐ Air quality information is updated on a regular basis ☐ Reports on the state of air quality are regularly issued	☐ Comprehensive information on status of AQ management (raw and processed air quality monitoring data), AQI, more detailed information from EI/SA, local impacts, AQM policies and action plans to control air pollution) are used in communication activities ☐ AQ information is updated on a real-time basis ☐ Reports on the state of air

				☐ Health advisories are made during events of high air pollution	quality are routinely issued ☐ Advanced public warnings are accurately issued
Access to information / Communication channels used	☐ AQ data or any other relevant information is not shared with the public	☐ AQ data is available to the public through request	☐ The public can download general information on AQ online ☐ Some media channels are used to communicate AQ *Examples of media channels: print media, email/mobile alerts, social media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook), website, television and radio, billboards, printed reports*	☐ Public can download more information on AQ online, such as processed monitoring data, trends in air quality, health impacts of air pollution ☐ A wider selection of communication channels is used	☐ Public can download detailed information on the state of air quality, local impacts (health, environmental, etc.), policies and action plans for specific areas online ☐ Multiple communication channels and innovative solutions/ technologies are utilized

ROADMAP FOR AIR QUALITY COMMUNICATION

Clean Air Asia's Guidance Framework for Better Air Quality in Asian Cities[2] features a roadmap to enable cities to improve their air quality communications. To move towards a fully developed air quality communication program, air quality information needs to be clear, comprehensive, accurate, precise, understandable and relevant to the concerns at hand. The information should also provide some indication of reliability and uncertainty. Based on the assessment results from **Table 3**, you may refer to the table below for recommended steps corresponding to your city's stage of air quality communication (underdeveloped, developing, emerging, maturing, fully developed).

Table 4: Guidance Framework for Better Air Quality in Asian Cities' roadmap for air quality communication

Developmental stages	Steps to follow
Underdeveloped	Air quality • Adopt an Ambient Air Quality Standard (AAQS) (if none yet adopted) to mandate air quality monitoring [See *GA 1: Ambient air quality standards and monitoring*] Multiple benefits • Build capacity for communicating AQ information to policymakers and the public Technical process • Build capacity to measure, collate, and process AQ data from ad hoc or project-based monitoring activities for use in communication activities • Use satellite data to understand status of air quality • Use regional or global reports to identify major sources of local air pollution
Developing	Management process • Enhance capacity to communicate AQ information to policymakers and the public in a more systematic way • Build capacity to issue ad hoc press releases on state of AQ and advisories during pollution episodes • Start building capacity for information technology to ensure online accessibility of general AQ information to the public Technical process • Strengthen capacity to measure, collate, process, and update AQ monitoring data and general information on pollution sources for use in more regular communication activities • Develop capacity to use one or two media channels to communicate AQ information • Adopt an AQI
Emerging	Management process • Develop and implement communication strategies for policymakers and the public

---

[2] https://cleanairasia.org/ibaq/guidance-framework/

	• Strengthen capacity to institutionalize and systematize AQ communication to policymakers, the public, and a wider range of stakeholders • Strengthen capacity to issue regular press releases on state of AQ and systematically release advisories during pollution episodes • Ensure that the public can access more AQ information online (i.e. processed AQ monitoring data, AQ trends, health impacts) • Ensure resources are available for AQ communication **Technical process** • Strengthen capacity to measure, collate, process, and update processed AQ monitoring data, AQI, information on pollution sources from EI/SA, local data on air pollution health impacts, and AQM action plans for use in regular and systematic communication activities • Enhance capacity to use a wider selection of modern communication channels
Maturing	**Management process** • Develop and implement communication strategies for all stakeholders • Strengthen capacity to institutionalize and systematize AQ communication to all stakeholders • Strengthen capacity to issue routine press releases on state of AQ • Systematically provide advance warnings/forecasts and public health hazards of air pollution impacts • Update AQ information online (i.e. processed AQ monitoring data, AQ trends, health impacts) and ensure accessibility to the public and all stakeholders • Ensure resources are available for AQ communication **Technical process** • Strengthen capacity to communicate comprehensive and non-technical information on status of AQM (i.e. processed AQ monitoring data, AQI, more detailed information from EI/SA, local data on air pollution health impacts, and AQM action plans) for use in regular and systematic communication activities • Update AQ information on a real-time basis • Enhance capacity to use multiple communication channels and innovative technologies to communicate AQ information • Conduct source apportionment to identify key sources of local air pollution
Fully developed	**Management process** • Ensure proper implementation and review of communication strategies for all stakeholders; ensure feedback mechanism • Highlight co-benefits of AQ and GHG mitigation • Strengthen capacity to issue routine press releases on state of AQ • Systematically provide advance warnings/forecasts and public health hazards of air pollution impacts • Update AQ information on a real-time basis and make available online (i.e. processed AQ monitoring data, AQ trends, health impacts); ensure accessibility to the public and all stakeholders • Ensure resources are available to sustain AQ communication activities • Dedicate/assign staff position for public engagement/communication **Technical process** • Strengthen capacity to communicate comprehensive and non-technical information on status of AQM through sustainable training (i.e. processes AQ monitoring data, AQI, more detailed information from EI/SA, local data

	on air pollution health impacts, and AQM action plans)
	• Ensure routine and systematic communication activities
	• Update AQ information on a real-time basis
	• Explore innovative solutions for AQ communication

REFERENCE:

Clean Air Asia, 2016. *Guidance Area 4: Air Quality Communication. Guidance Framework for Better Air Quality in Asia*, https://cleanairasia.org/ibaq/guidance-framework/