Module 10

RAISING AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

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RAISING AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

Objectives of this module:
• Highlight the importance of raising awareness in the strategy against IAS
• Outline the important points for raising awareness
• Describe how to design an awareness raising “campaign”

10.1 Introduction

Human activities are the main cause of the invasive species problem, whether intentional introductions for specific purposes, or unintentional as a by-product of some other activity. In order to address the invasive species issue, it is therefore imperative that the strategy includes elements designed to modify human values, beliefs and behaviour across all sectors of society, from policy makers and institutions to schools and the general public.

Raising awareness and educating stakeholders are essential components in the strategy against IAS

As stated in GISP’s Global Strategy on Invasive Species: "Active public engagement is critical to successful invasive species management… leading to an informed public that supports ongoing actions to reduce the threat of IAS, and key stakeholders who are actively engaged in implementation of IAS solutions...

If people do not know about IAS or understand IAS issues, they cannot make effective contributions to dealing with IAS

10.2 CEPA programmes

Engaging the public and all stakeholders is, in fact, important to biodiversity issues as a whole. For example, the Convention on Biological Diversity – and many other conventions and organisations – places a strong emphasis on it through their Communications, Education and Public Awareness programmes (CEPA). In this context, the term is commonly understood to refer to a suite of social instruments that build support, inform, engage and empower people with the aim of bringing about a change in action. CEPA also links science & ecology to people’s social and economic reality.
Activity 10.1
Discuss why raising awareness is so important.

10.3 CEPA terminology

10.3.1 Communication
“is the two-way exchange of information and is a means to gain cooperation of groups in society by listening to them first and clarifying why and how decisions are made. In an instrumental approach, communication is used with other instruments to support biodiversity conservation to address economic constraints and to motivate action.”

10.3.2 Education
“is a set of processes that can inform, motivate and empower people to support biodiversity conservation, not only by making lifestyle changes, but also through promoting change in the way that institutions, business, and governments operate.”

10.3.3 Awareness
“brings the issues relating to biodiversity to the attention of key groups who have the power to influence outcomes. Awareness is an agenda setting and marketing exercise helping people to know what and why this is an important issue, the aspirations for the targets, and what is and can be done to achieve these.”

Further information on CEPA programmes under the CBD can be found on www.biodiv.org/programmes/outreach/cepa/home.shtml

10.4 The objectives of CEPA programmes

Greater knowledge and awareness about invasive species is a pre-requisite to increased stakeholder participation and engagement. Conversely, lack of awareness is a major contributor to failure in addressing IAS issues. For instance, further species introductions may take place out of ignorance when rules and regulations are ignored, or if measures to address IAS are actively opposed. Although the costs of ensuring that all stakeholders are properly informed may be considerable, the benefits include a higher likelihood of success in achieving management goals. Raising awareness can be considered as part of a prevention strategy.

The benefits of raising awareness include:
10.4.1 Greater understanding of issues
Biological invasion is an extremely complex phenomenon and is often removed from the public’s daily experience and perceptions. There is a danger of people feeling overwhelmed by the various aspects of the problem. Key messages about the causes and effects of invasive species will provide a framework and lead to a deeper understanding.

10.4.2 “Ownership” of the problem, and involvement in the solutions
Individuals, small businesses (e.g. pet fish stores) and even large industry (e.g. exporters reliant upon shipping) can change their behaviour as a result of better information and adopt more environmentally friendly practices. The key to evoking such change is highlighting their involvement in the problem and conveying a sense of ownership to them regarding the solution.

10.4.3 Greater acceptability of measures to address IAS
Even controversial actions (e.g. use of poisons in eradicating the Black-Striped Mussel in Australia, Module 6) can succeed if the decision-making is transparent (e.g. includes consultation), and the reasons for the activities are explained properly.

10.4.4 Increased political support / greater resources
Awareness at decision-making levels will lead to informed decisions and better political support, hence more resources. Often projects are not funded or necessary support is not given to management projects because the decision makers are unaware of the magnitude of the problem.

Raising awareness helps to create greater understanding, ownership of the problem and its solutions, widespread acceptance and increased support for IAS issues

Many target groups need education to aid in dealing with IAS

- Politicians
- Scientific community
- Port authorities
- Educators
- Fishing/mariculture industry
- Cargo and transport industry
- Agriculture
- General public

10.5 Designing CEPA programmes
The impacts of IAS are wide-ranging, with direct and indirect effects on the economic, social and environmental interests of stakeholders (Module 1). Helping target groups become aware of the implications for themselves, e.g.
the loss of natural habitats or increased costs associated with management of IAS, will contribute to greater engagement of stakeholder groups.

The nature of CEPA programmes can be significantly influenced by factors such as resource availability and the nature of the stakeholders. Therefore, a variety of techniques may be necessary to achieve communication goals. It is best to take a systematic approach to designing the programme.

Important first steps in planning a campaign are to:

- Decide on the central message and objective of your campaign
- Define the target audience
- Use appropriate communication tools

10.5.1 Creating a mind map

Mind mapping is a technique used for arranging ideas and their interconnections visually; it is a popular brainstorming technique and a useful first step to designing a CEPA programme.

Under the UNEP GEF project Removing Barriers to Invasive Plant Management in Africa four pilot countries (Ethiopia, Ghana, Uganda and Zambia) are addressing barriers that exist to the management of invasive plants under four categories: the enabling policy environment, information, invasive plant prevention and management and capacity. As part of the project preparatory stage each country has devised a communication strategy to enhance the communication of Invasive plant issues to identified stakeholders. The combined strategies for the four countries have been summarised in the mind map below.

In other words, mind mapping can be used to define the message that needs to be communicated; the target audience; the methods of communication; the education and training needs; and the challenges.

Activity 10.2

Choose an IAS that is familiar to you. Create a mind map to figure out what messages about IAS need to be given to which target audience groups. List the issues to be addressed with each of the groups and the combination of tools and techniques to be used with them.
Figure 10.2. Mind map summarising IAS communication strategies devised for African countries.

10.5.2 Designing a public awareness raising campaign

10.5.2.1 Deciding what to raise awareness about

In designing an effective public awareness activity, deciding what it is central message that the campaign will address is the starting point. The second step is to be sure to whom the awareness campaign is being addressed – such as towards school teachers, customs officials or environmental managers.

Some examples of objectives are:

- Disseminate information on IAS to improve a general understanding of the issue
- Increase awareness of a particular species and its impacts
• Encourage stakeholders to take a specific action (e.g. fishermen to clean boats and equipment to prevent spread of IAS)
• To bring about a change in attitude toward an IAS which is popular yet destructive
• Build support for IAS management (e.g. to explain why it is necessary to use a controversial technique such as poisoning)
• Motivate people to participate in programmes and activities

10.5.2.2 Defining the target audience
Different target groups will respond differently to different communication styles and techniques. Naturally, to be most effective it is necessary to identify the target audience for each campaign, or for each part of a campaign. The list below is indicative of the various types of groups that can come under the broad classification of target audience.

• The general public
  The general public can be both a driver of IAS problems and the group that is left to deal with the effects of IAS problems. Support from the general public can make the difference between success and failure of an overall IAS strategy as well as for specific programmes.

• Schools
  Schools at all levels are the starting point to build ‘IAS awareness’. They can be a very effective group for the transmission of messages. Parents can be exposed to IAS issues through their children, especially when a programme includes outings and/or projects to be done at home.

• Special-interest groups
  This group includes specialist societies like angling or diving clubs, wildlife groups, naturalists and the like. When IAS issues are relevant to a group’s particular interest, they tend to be more receptive to the need for management and prevention. They are also likely to be willing to play their part when they realise the difference a change in a practice might make.

• Industry
  The list of industries that should receive education in IAS is long. Some examples: garden centres, aquaria, pet shops, horticulturists, agriculturists, foresters, fishers, conservation professionals, border control officials, quarantine officers, health and safety officials as well planning, transport, shipping and building industries.

• Policy makers
  Depending on the national setup and IAS in question, this group could include local and national government, its officials, agencies and institutions. This includes those who form strategies and influence policy, as well as those who are involved in its implementation.
10.5.2.3 **Use of appropriate communication tools**

The following is a list of general points to consider when promoting messages:

- Formulate a clear message, using **simple** and **unambiguous** language
- Use catchy phrases and eye-catching logos.
- Use flagship species or pathways as much as possible to capture attention (e.g.: use an iconic plant or an animal that is negatively affected by an IAS). Flagship cases can be used to highlight the issue of an endangered species that people value, an economic cost to the ‘average person’, or a health risk to children etc.
- Consistent messages and messages that not only educate but also motivate to change actions
- Focus on the solution rather than the problem
- Focus on the values that need to be protected rather than the IAS itself
- Remember to be sensitive to cultural values and perceptions
- Don’t use hysterical language or make inaccurate statements – overstating the case can have significant negative consequences down the line
- Don’t ostracise any stakeholders
- Be very careful of publicly laying blame (e.g. on an industry that might be persuaded to change their actions and help prevent further introductions or fund restitution actions)

As with any job, using the right tool or combination of tools will produce the best results. There is a wide range of communication tools and techniques that can be used effectively with different target groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication Tool</th>
<th>Target Audience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mass media such as television, radio &amp; newspapers</td>
<td>The broadest spectrum of people, from lay public to industry and governmental decision makers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posters, flyers or brochures in areas like pet shops &amp; nurseries, shopping malls &amp; market places, stations &amp; airports</td>
<td>Each location will reach certain target groups, who are using introduction pathways or who contribute to or are affected by IAS in some way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentations at conferences and related meetings</td>
<td>High-level audiences such as scientists and planners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displays at an aquarium or science fair</td>
<td>General public and target groups (such as pet keepers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community outreach projects</td>
<td>Local communities and local industries affected by IAS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An awareness campaign should first ask **what** the message is, then **who** is being targeted and then **how** to best communicate
10.6 Designing communication tools

Making a poster
A poster is a visual communication tool. It should engage stakeholders and help get the main points across to as many people as possible.

A good poster has a clear message, is clearly visual and can be easily read from at least two meters away

Remember to:

- A picture paints a thousand words!
- Convey as much information as possible using as few words as possible
- Choose one clear message per poster and keep this as the focus through the poster
- Headings should contain key points, use short sentences and catchy phrases
- Use images and text to support ‘the message’
- Balance the text with images
- Use bold colours that catch the eye and excite the brain
- The audience shapes your poster
- Know the audience and aim the messages at them. Different audiences require different levels of information.
- Put contact information somewhere reasonably obvious on the poster
- Plan, Draft, Edit and Consult

Below are some good examples of successful posters
Figure 10.3. An eye-catching poster warning people not to release their aquarium pets into rivers and lakes.

Figure 10.4. Eye-catching logos and a clear message.
Figure 10.5. A striking logo and a consistent message in different formats - a horizontal sticker and a large poster.

Figure 10.6. A colourful, informative and educational poster.
Activity 10.3
Create a poster or a flyer to help raise awareness about a particular IAS that has been encountered during the course

10.7 Key points of this module

- Raising awareness and educating stakeholders are essential in the strategy against IAS; an informed and involved public is its greatest asset
- If people do not know about IAS or understand IAS issues, they cannot make effective contributions to dealing with IAS
- Raising awareness helps to create greater understanding, ownership of the problem and its solutions, widespread acceptance and increased support for IAS issues
- ‘Flagship’ (dramatic) cases of impact of some invasions can be used to capture interest
- An awareness campaign should first ask what the message is, then who is being targeted and then how to best communicate that message
- A good poster has a clear message, is clearly visual and can be easily read from at least two meters away