COMPASS

# CURE COMMUNICATIONS APPRAISAL AND STRATEGY

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COMPASS

Community Partnerships for Sustainable Resource Management in Malawi

# CURE Communications Appraisal and Strategy


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# Executive Summary

The Coordination Unit for the Rehabilitation of the Environment was set up in 1994 to coordinate environmental issues and activities in Malawi. In the past CURE was an apex organisation for environmental activities and partners in Malawi, supported by its vibrant communications department. However, in the past few years, due to staff turnover and a significant decrease in funding, CURE's communication department has been cut and most communications activities have been shelved or dramatically reduced.

COMPASS provided support for a consultant to develop a communications strategy/business plan for CURE and undertake an appraisal of current communication activities, assets and capacity. The assignment was undertaken over eighteen days from December 2003 to January 2004. Key informant interviews were held with CURE staff, board of governance members, and NGO and government partners, to help inform the appraisal and make recommendations for the strategy.

It was observed that CURE has good potential to build on its role as environment and natural resource management coordination unit for Malawi, but that opportunities had been missed due to CURE becoming less proactive. Some partner organisations had lost confidence in CURE, while others felt that with its broad strategy, CURE was lacking focus and direction. Some respondents said that CURE lacked the mandate to represent NGOs in environment and natural resource management policy-making arenas. However at a recent meeting convened by CURE, NGOs voted CURE to represent them on the board of the Malawi Environment Endowment Trust and to convene a forum for civil society to discuss and advocate on the Local Government Bill.

Key recommendations made in this report include:

- CURE should prioritise its efforts into key areas, and develop a work plan in consultation with its partners and board of governance
- CURE should work to improve its geographical reach by holding regional meetings or designating other partners to act as regional focal points
- CURE should take action to improve its financial sustainability
- CURE should consolidate its mandate for representing other NGOs through election, legislation or signing a memorandum of understanding with partner NGOs.

The communications appraisal outlined how ongoing communication activities, namely Environmental Coordination Meetings, the Environment Learning Centre, CURE's web site, and policy briefs could be enhanced and strengthened.

A practical communications strategy was designed to provide an overview of the critical components and activities that CURE needs to undertake in order to fulfil its mission. It had three main objectives:

- Ensuring that NGOs/CBOs have a greater voice in policy making;
- Information dissemination on policies, policy harmonisation, best practice and how to influence policy formulation; and
- Marketing CURE, to develop its position as coordinator and focal point for natural resource management in Malawi.

Staffing options were discussed along with assets and an indicative budget was provided. Key activities and tools were outlined in the strategy along with simple methods for monitoring and evaluation.

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# Acronyms and Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| CBNRM | community-based natural resource management |
| CBO | community-based organisation |
| COMPASS | Community Partnerships for Sustainable Resource Management in Malawi |
| CONGOMA | Council for Non Governmental Organisations of Malawi |
| CRECCOM | Creative Centre for Community Mobilization |
| CURE | Coordination Unit for the Rehabilitation of the Environment |
| DTP | desktop publishing |
| EAD | Environmental Affairs Department |
| ECM | Environmental Coordination Meeting (convened by CURE) |
| ICCE | International Centre for Conservation Education |
| ICRAF | International Center for Research in Agro-forestry |
| NGO | non-governmental organisation |
| NRM | natural resource management |
| MASM | Medical Aid Society of Malawi |
| MMCT | Mulanje Mountain Conservation Trust |
| SARDC | Southern Africa Research and Documentation Centre |
| VSO | Volunteer Service Overseas |
| WESM | Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malawi |
| WUSC | World University Service of Canada |

# 1. Introduction

The Coordination Unit for the Rehabilitation of the Environment (CURE) was set up in 1994 to facilitate coordination and information exchange mainly amongst NGOs and CBOs working in the environmental and natural resource management sector.

Due to various factors (including a significant decrease in funding and staff turnover), CURE's communication department has been cut and most communications activities have been shelved or dramatically reduced.

Given the critical role of the communications department in CURE's core business, COMPASS has provided support for a consultant to develop a communications strategy/business plan for CURE. The scope of work is given in Annex 1.

After a period of consultation with CURE staff, the board of governance, COMPASS and other key informants (government and NGO partners), this report has been drawn up to appraise CURE's communication activities, outline strategic options for future roles and responsibilities of CURE's communication department, and look at opportunities for revitalising the department and for ensuring financial sustainability. Annex 2 contains a list key informants interviewed.

## 1.1 CURE

CURE was established with a mandate to strengthen the capacity of NGOs and CBOs to undertake sustainable natural resource management through capacity building, coordination and advocacy. Over the years CURE grew into a national focal point on environment and natural resource management issues.

In 2001, CURE held a strategic review to tailor its activities to the changing context of Malawi, notably the proliferation of NGOs in Malawi, the decentralised environmental management framework policy, and the abundance of environment and natural resource management polices, acts and plans and strategies.

At this review, CURE shaped its revised mission statement and developed a five-year strategic plan. CURE's new mission is *"to enhance the ability of NGOs/CBOs to improve the management of Malawi's environment and natural resources in a participatory and gender sensitive manner for the benefit of the community, through more effective policy development, dissemination and capacity-building."*

CURE's *Strategic Plan 2002-2005*, outlines three strategic priorities:

1. Popular participation in environment and natural resource management policy processes;
2. Environment and natural resource management policy dissemination to NGOs and CBOs; and
3. NGO/CBO capacity building in community based natural resource management.

### The role of communications

It is clear that communication is at the very core of CURE's work. CURE sees itself as a catalyst, facilitating NGOs and CBOs to have a greater voice in policy and programme development through consultation, consensus building and advocacy. In addition, policy dissemination is fundamental if stakeholders are to be involved in policy making. A key informant commented that without communication, the organisation is effectively dead.

# 2. Communications Appraisal

## 2.1 Current Communication Activities

### Policy Survey

In December 2003, CURE conducted a *Situation Analysis/Baseline Survey on NGO/CBOs Involvement in Policy Processes* (Nangoma and Munthali, 2003), which revealed the limited access to, and understanding of, national environment policies among NGOs and CBOs. Survey respondents called for CURE to continue to play a coordinating role in ensuring that civil society is fully involved in policy processes. They also called for CURE to take a role in policy dissemination and awareness raising, as well as coordinating training in policy analysis and advocacy.

### Environmental Coordination Meetings and issue-based fora

Twice a year, Environmental Coordination Meetings (ECMs) are held on key and emerging natural resource management issues in Malawi to:

- Discuss policy and legislative issues as they relate to environment and natural resource management;
- Review strategy formulation and harmonisation on sustainable natural resource management; and
- Elect NGO representatives at key meetings convened by government and partner organisations.

In addition to the regular ECMs, ad hoc issue-based meetings are held. In the last six months two meetings have been held: in July 2003 an issue-based forum reviewed the National Strategy on Sustainable Development (and other natural resource policies). In December 2003, CURE convened an ECM to discuss the findings of the policy survey, as well as examining avenues through which CURE could strengthen civil society involvement in policy processes.

In the course of this assignment, key informant interviews revealed that while many people felt that ECMs were very useful in the past, they had begun to lose their value and significance. Past ECMs were commended as networking tools, forums for conflict resolution and consensus-building and sharing information. In the past few years, ECMs had been held infrequently and irregularly, and fewer key influential people attended them.

There were several other concerns:

- Several interviewees mentioned the **absence of a mandate** to coordinate NGOs. The government view is that CURE does not have the mandate to represent other NGOs unless it is enshrined in legislation. Partner NGOs and CBOs take a more pragmatic view, i.e. that CURE could represent them if elected to do so. Elections would increase the legitimacy of CURE's position. (Note: At the last ECM, CURE was mandated to convene a forum for civil society to participate in developing the Local Government Bill).
- ECM participants make recommendations on key issues, but there is **no real mechanism for follow-up**.
- Attendance at ECMs has become patchy, and certain **key sectors are poorly represented**. In particular it was noted that there was little representation from the government at the last few ECMs. As one of CURE's key roles is to help NGOs and CBOs have a greater voice in policy making, ECMs would be more effective if government and donor staff regularly participate.
- **Limited geographical reach**, due to CURE being based in Blantyre/Limbe, and most meetings held in the same town. Organisations based in the central and northern regions are less likely to be able to participate. ECMs that were held in Mzuzu and Lilongwe were well received and attended, and many key informants recommended that CURE try to hold regional ECMs regularly.

**Recommendations to improve ECMs**

- Improve geographical reach – through holding regional fora and ECMs regularly. Partner organisations in the north and central region could co-convene the meetings (thus creating an opportunity for cost sharing as these partners could cover some of the costs involved).
- Increase legitimacy for CURE to represent other NGOs (through more elections, signing a Memorandum of Understanding with partner NGOs, or enshrining CURE's role in legislation).
- Ensure that participants are invited from all sectors. In addition, investigate whether there needs to mechanism to encourage participation from government etc. ECMs need to be widely publicised in good time for people to schedule attendance.
- Discuss options for follow up mechanisms with partners at a forthcoming ECM.

## Representation on key committees and networks

CURE represents NGOs on key policy-making committees and networking organisations, including:

- Parliamentary Committee on the Environment
- National Council for the Environment
- Malawi Environment Endowment Trust
- CBNRM working group
- NGO Gender Network
- Permaculture Network
- Kapinga Network
- Pan African Programme on Land and Resource Rights
- PhytoTrade Africa (the Southern Africa natural product trade association)
- PELUM (Participatory Ecological Land Use Management)
- CONGOMA (Council for Non-Governmental Organisations of Malawi)

For several years, CURE convened the **civil society taskforce on land and natural resources**. The taskforce succeeded in persuading the government to slow down the passage of land legislation, to allow time for discussion and input from other stakeholders. The taskforce is still active, now coordinated by the Wildlife and Environment Society of Malawi (WESM), and CURE is a member.

At an ECM held in December 2003, CURE was mandated to convene a forum for civil society to discuss the draft Local Government Bill. At the same meeting, participants voted CURE to represent them on the board of the Malawi Environment Endowment Trust (MEET).

## Policy Briefs

With support from COMPASS, CURE has produced plain language summaries of key natural resource policies on forestry, land, fisheries and wildlife. Each policy has been summarised in non-technical language, translated and produced in four languages, to try to reach a wider audience. Key informants praised the production of the policy briefs, but commented on poor distribution, lacking a sufficient print run (i.e. inadequate number of copies), not covering enough vernacular languages, and poor publicity.

**Recommendations to improve the impact of policy briefs**

- Ensure an effective dissemination plan is included in budgeting future policy briefs. Relying on partners to distribute copies is not effective (as they lack the resources to distribute them effectively). Similarly, handing out briefs at ECMs is only effective in reaching participants at ECMs, not necessarily reaching a wider audience.
- Consider producing policy briefs in more vernacular languages.
- Try to find small grants from foundations, donors or academic institutions to reprint and distribute existing policy briefs, and to publicise their availability.

- Consider producing CD ROMs with full texts of policy, acts and legislations on natural resource management issues along with policy briefs. CD ROMs are inexpensive to produce and a donor could pay for the costs involved and/or CD ROMs could be sold to bring in a small amount of revenue.
- Distribute complete sets of policy briefs to libraries and academic institutions so that the reach can be enhanced through library users.

## Web site

CURE has a web presence on Malawi Net, with the goal of disseminating key information, principally on policies, to web users in Malawi and regionally. The plan is to upload electronic copies of policies and other documents onto the site, starting with the Policy Survey. It is proving difficult to obtain electronic copies of policies, so this would involve retyping them or scanning them with optical character recognition (OCR) software.

In reality the web site has not been updated for a very long time, and it is clear from conversations with key informants that using the web as a means of information dissemination is limited in Malawi, although it could have regional and international impact in terms of marketing CURE.

CURE has a second web site online, hosted with SDNP, which is gives outdated telephone numbers, staff lists and programmes. It is recommended that the web sites are combined and updated. It would be relatively simple to do this, and enable domain pointing (so that someone visiting the old site will be automatically redirected to the new one). Outdated or wrong information is worse than none at all.

Currently CURE lacks the capacity to manage the web site inhouse, and would contract web site maintenance through Malawi Net. CURE should consider the following aspects in web site planning:

- The relative impact of the web as a tool for enabling popular participation in policy making in Malawi (low);
- Whether the budget for managing the web site could be better used for other communications/information dissemination activities;
- Other possible purposes of the web site (e.g. building regional and international networks); who the target audiences would be; what information visitors would seek, and what information CURE can provide;
- Ways to monitor web site use and impact, e.g. through the collection of web usage statistics, which detail the geographical reach of your site, which pages are accessed the most and so on.

### Options for CURE's web site

Recommended options:

- Put up a holding page giving basic information on CURE, outlining its priority areas of action, and giving contact details for more information. There could also be a sign up form for CURE e-mail list which would provide news of CURE's advocacy efforts and other programmes, policy information etc. It would be relatively easy to do this, and someone should to be assigned to work out the main elements and write the text of the pages.
- Additionally, combine both sites (as discussed above) so that there are no longer two sites with conflicting data.

Other options:

- Take both web sites down. This is the cheapest option.
- Subcontract management of the web site to someone who is capable of giving strategic input.
- Hire an IT manager/communications co-ordinator with web design skills to manage the site in-house. Web site management software will need to be purchased.

### Focal Point for SARDC's State of Zambezi Environment

CURE acts as a focal point for SARDC's State of Zambezi Environment project. CURE's role is to disseminate information nationally and regionally and develop and coordinate a national programme of action. In practice, it acts as an information clearinghouse, sending out materials to a mailing list of around 160 organisations, government departments, academic institutions and individuals. CURE also distributes SARDC materials at ECMs and issue-based forums.

## 2.2 Asset and Capacity Appraisal

### Darwin Publishing Unit assets

CURE's Darwin Publishing Unit (DPU) assets all date from 1998, and are mainly outdated and in need of repair. The equipment is currently sitting on the floor of one of the offices, most of it unused for years, and it is currently of value to the organisation. DPU equipment includes:

- 1 computer with monitor, floppy and CD ROM drive
- 1 lexmark printer Optra 1650
- 1 duplo digital printer and four toner cartridges
- 1 Epson colour printer
- 1 Astra 1200S scanner
- 1 plastic comb binder (not working)
- Uninterruptible power source
- 1 Iomega Zip drive (no zip disks could be found to test it)
- No software CDs or disks could be found

The *End of Term Evaluation Report for CURE* (Sambo, 2001) refers a business plan being drawn up for the DPU, with an internal assessment on its self-sustainability. The internal assessment *"stated that the DPU is not viable as a business venture"* (Sambo, 2001, p.58). In the year 1999-2000, only six publications were produced through the DPU, half the planned target number. Key informant interviews revealed the opinion that CURE never had capacity to run the DPU and the experience that CURE was not able to do publications commissioned for them.

Currently there is no capacity for reviving the DPU, although several staff members have expressed a desire to do so.

#### Income generating potential

- Start up costs would be relatively high, as the equipment is outdated and need of repair or replacement, and CURE lacks capacity for running the DPU. In addition there would be costs of marketing and securing clients.
- Increased competition for a neighbouring publishing unit may affect the pricing policy.

#### Options for making use of DPU assets

Recommended option:

- Selling most of the equipment. It might be worth keeping the scanner and comb binder for use in the communications department. Revenues from the rest of the equipment could be used to offset costs of purchasing equipment for the communications coordinator. (Mark Boulton of ICCE estimates the duplo printer could be sold for between US $2000 to $3000.)

Other options:

- Repairing the equipment for lease;
- Re-launching the DPU. This would involve:
  a) repairing the equipment, and

b) supplementing it with newer equipment to rebuild the publishing unit (requiring significant investment - Mark Boulton estimates this at US $25000);
c) market research to find clients and develop pricing policy;
d) capacity building of staff to be trained in publishing, or the recruitment of someone to run the DPU inhouse.

## Environmental Learning Centre

The Environmental Learning Centre was set up in 1997 to house information and resources that could encourage partners to develop sustainable natural resource and environmental management practices. Although it has been depleted, the centre still contains some books, newsletters and journals, reports, strategies, policies, training manuals and extension kits. Topics covered include a range of environmental and NRM issues, gender issues, participatory methodologies, etc.

The Learning Centre is open general pubic, but resources are loaned to members only. When the centre was set up there were three categories of members:

- Individual category, with lifetime membership for joining fee of MK 50;
- Builder category – for NGOs and private sector organisations, joining fee of MK 500, which allows for 10 members; and
- International category – for international NGOs, with a joining fee of MK 1000.

Members also received newsletter, invitations to Environmental Coordination Meetings, and other CURE mailings.

The Learning Centre is still operational, used on ad hoc basis, without adequate supervision, and without tracking library loans.

Key informants held views that the learning centre, although depleted, was unique and useful resource both for CURE and other environment/natural resource management players. They recommended building up the learning centre particularly in areas where CURE is now working, e.g. policy, policy analysis and advocacy.

### Options for the Environmental Learning Centre:

Recommended option:

- Assessing the income generating potential of the resource centre. Options could include:
  a) Revising the fees for new members, tied with a recruitment campaign for new members
  b) Examining other ways of generating income, through for example, allowing access to email and internet on a for-fee basis
  c) Enhancing the reach of the learning centre, by offering information dissemination (i.e. copies of documents in the centre) by fax, email (if electronic copies are held), or post on a for-fee basis. This would need to be accompanied by a marketing campaign to alert potential clients of the services CURE could offer.

Other options:

- Selling resource materials (as a way to generate resources for future communications initiatives), and closing the Centre.
- Continuing to run the ELC on an ad-hoc basis. This could provide an interim service while CURE seeks further resources for expanding the learning centre.

### Recommended strategic expansion of the learning centre:

- Focus on key issues currently being worked on by CURE.
- Find out free resources, newsletter subscriptions that are available, and sign up for them

- Research seminal texts and papers (perhaps through recommendations from members and partner organisations) on CURE's priority issues, and prioritise them for purchase (The current CURE budget has a line for "books").
- Offer review of publications in the newsletter in return for free copies.
- The catalogue system should be revived and tied in with improved management systems, so that documents can be added to the catalogue and tracked effectively. This will require investment and development of in-house capacity, repair of some equipment and time).

### Capacity

The office staff consists of four professional staff and one support staff. Between them, the staff report that they have skills in:

- PowerPoint skills and public speaking
- Meeting/workshop coordination
- Report and proposal writing
- Basic desktop design
- Budgeting
- Advocacy and lobbying
- Library cataloguing and documentation management.

One staff member is undertaking a diploma in PR and business management.

No single staff member currently has the capacity to be Communications Coordinator, or the time allocated to do some communication tasks (such as running the environmental learning centre). Neither has anyone taken responsibility for key communications tasks. Thus communications activities have been at best ad hoc, and for the most part, non-existent.

## 2.3 Key Recommendations

CURE is well positioned to coordinate environmental and natural resource management issues, and shows potential in its efforts to implement its Strategic Plan. However interviews with key informants shows that further work needs to be done to consolidate, prioritise and build on CURE's activities. In the light of this, the following overall recommendations are made:

### Focus and prioritise key areas of action

Most key informants expressed the need for CURE to seriously focus much on this effort rather than attempting to cover a wide range of environmental and natural resources management issues and policies in Malawi. The strategic plan attempted to do this, but some interviewees felt that the new team at CURE were not focused on their new mandate or that the strategic plan did not develop definable work areas that CURE could prioritise. This lack of focus had resulted in several challenges:

- Confusion over the role of CURE (some respondents view CURE as the Environment Affairs Department - a government watchdog agency - of NGOs; others as an organisation which exists to build consensus among NGOs; others still as an organisation that share technical environmental packages among environment/development implementers);
- Confusion over who CURE represents at key policy-making issues (i.e., does CURE speak for itself, or represent the consensus of a number of NGOs and environmental actors?);
- CURE activities are seen as ad-hoc, donor-dependent, and lacking the credibility of a strategic approach to priority issues.

It is far better to concentrate resources and efforts on one or two key priority initiatives, than to attempt to cover a wide range of issues in insufficient depth. A work plan needs to be developed that reflects

where CURE is and what it is capable of achieving, and clearly maps out key action areas related to CURE's strategic plan.

### Deliver what you promise

CURE must meet its own performance goals and achieve the results that are expected of it by its partners and donors. In the past CURE has made commitments it has been unable to keep, due to lack of capacity or resources. This is partly due to enthusiasm, and CURE wanting to cover all environmental/natural resource issues. With the current capacity, assets and resources this is simply not feasible. Meeting donor targets is vital if the organisation wishes to continue.

### Improve geographical reach

Due to financial limitations, CURE's meetings are usually held in Blantyre/Limbe. This means that attendance is generally limited to organisations and representatives from the South of Malawi. Two meetings have been held in Mzuzu (hugely appreciated by northern based attendees) and one in Lilongwe. Interviewees strongly recommended that CURE continue regional meetings so participation from these areas can be stronger. Some key informants went further, recommending that CURE look at designating regional focal points, which could convene their own regional ECMs directly (or in partnership with CURE).

### Be proactive and dynamic

By not being proactive, CURE is missing opportunities to add value to the natural resource management (NRM) movement in Malawi, as well as benefiting itself. There appears to be little follow-up to CURE activities, and limited investigation of opportunities. CURE needs to be informed on key issues, initiatives and activities in order to be effective, and this can not happen without CURE taking a proactive role to information gathering. It needs to be looking ahead for future opportunities, so that advocacy efforts on policies can be started in good time, long before they being debated in parliament. CURE missed an opportunity when bidding was underway for COMPASS II, as CURE could have contacted all three bidders to form links with them at the concept stage, instead of waiting for the bidders to contact them – only two did in the end.

### Marketing campaign needed

CURE has gone through a period of instability that has affected some people's confidence in CURE being a viable, effective organisation. One way to rebuild this confidence would be for the CURE director to visit key organisations, outlining CURE's role and mandate and explaining that CURE is prioritising key action areas – and asking their opinion on the priority action areas for CURE. This should be followed up with emails and phone calls asking for clarification or views on emerging issues. The only way affiliates will trust CURE is if it shows itself to be a proactive, useful organisation that delivers on its promises.

### Communicate or die

A government representative stated that he was sure CURE had become part of the Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malawi. Other organisations are aware of CURE's existence but feel that it is largely inactive due to persistent financial insecurity and staff turnover. Two respondents put it very clearly: *"if CURE does not communicate, it is effectively dead."* CURE could do excellent quality work, but if nobody knows or benefits from it, then CURE's role as a coordination unit has totally failed.

As previously stated, opportunities are missed due to lack of communication. CURE needs to significantly improve its communication outreach (ideas for this are outlined in the Communication Strategy that follows) as well as information gathering and consultation. Simply being proactive will go a long way to achieve this.

## Take action to improve financial sustainability

CURE's financial situation has a huge impact on its activities. It is vital that steps are taken to improve CURE's financial sustainability. The board of governance and management staff must map out an action plan and implement it as soon as possible. Options to consider include: consultancy, income generation activities, donor proposals, cost sharing approaches, investment opportunities etc.

## Be creative in resource utilisation

Given CURE's recent history of financial instability, there is a tendency to spend too much time focusing on lack of resources rather than creatively using what there is. A little finance can go a long way if used creatively. CURE must explore opportunities for cost sharing or co-financing, and use innovate methods to stretch the budget where necessary.

## Improve Internal Information Management System

CURE's key role is that of coordination and information exchange and yet is surprisingly difficult within CURE to get hold of internal documents or publications or to find key contact details. Simple internal information management systems need to be developed to improve information access. The main criteria must be ease of use rather than a technology-led approach.

## Sharing opportunities

In the past CURE has sent representatives to meetings when the organisation does not have experience or knowledge of the topic, with the result that CURE loses credibility. CURE should decide on its key areas, and pass on such opportunities to other organisations with more relevant experience. This has happened in the past, but needs to continue in a more coordinated manner.

Similarly, CURE should look for sharing opportunities for capacity building, attending workshops and consultancies especially when CURE lacks the appropriate capacity. There could also be opportunities for sharing CURE's work such as convening regional ECMs or cost sharing on certain activities.

## Membership

Membership of CURE has been discussed as a mechanism for creating legitimacy for CURE to represent other NGOs in decision-making, and also as a way to supplement income. However, member services need to be developed first so that potential members can see tangible benefits of membership. Some organisations such as CBOs and district associations may never be able to pay membership fees, so provisions should be made to ensure that they are not excluded.

## Mandate for representing other NGOS

As previously discussed in the section on ECMs, the absence of a clear mandate to coordinate and represent other NGOs in policy making forums is inhibiting the impact of CURE's policy advocacy. Legitimacy could be obtained through membership, election, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed by partner NGOs, or legislation. In the short term, elections seem the most feasible route, followed by a MOU.

## Use Board of Governance as a Resource

The Board of Governance is a valuable, underutilised asset for CURE. Board members are ideally positioned to help market CURE, gather information, and look out for opportunities for CURE. They bring a wealth of experience, skills and knowledge and have their own networks that they can tap into. Their resources and time commitments limit the role of individual board members, but they are underutilised at present, and opportunities for harnessing their expertise should be maximised. Where possible, CURE management should use the board to create opportunities for staff development, look for cost-sharing options, market CURE, gathering and disseminating information on changing contexts,

donor priorities, networking opportunities. In addition board members could act as a sounding board for ideas and initiatives. If board members are prepared to confidently articulate CURE's salient points to prospective partners and/or donors face to face, they should be equipped with business cards with both their phone numbers/email and CURE's main contact details. This would be an inexpensive way of scaling up impact for the organisation.

# 3. Communication Strategy

## 3.1 Aim

This communications strategy is designed to be simple and practical, providing an overview of the critical components and activities that CURE needs to undertake in order to fulfil its mission.

The strategy is based on the Strategic Plan, particularly CURE's focus on ensuring popular participation in environment and natural resource management issues. Communication, advocacy and information dissemination is crucial for CURE's success, so this strategy is designed to be implemented without having to wait for significant additional funding.

As CURE's profile increases, and its activities expand, there will be need to build on this strategy, adding activities where needed. A list of other communication tools that could be added to CURE's communication strategy at a later stage, is given in Annex 3.

## 3.2 Objectives

CURE's communication strategy has three main objectives:

1. Ensuring that NGOs/CBOs have a greater voice in policy processes.
2. Disseminating information on policies, policy harmonisation, best practice, and how to influence policy formulation;
3. Marketing CURE, to develop its position as coordinator and focal point for natural resource management issues in Malawi.

## 3.3 Staffing

In the past, CURE's communications department functioned successfully with a dynamic full time communications coordinator, with help from support staff and other professional staff when needed. It is therefore assumed that a dynamic communications coordinator could implement the strategy with some support from other CURE staff. A job description and profile of the skills and experience needed for the communications coordinator is given in Annex 4.

Clearly, communication is at the heart of CURE's role and mandate, and all staff will have to be involved in communications activities on some level. The communications coordinator would take the role of overseeing the activities, implementing some of them directly, but also ensuring a participative, empowering approach is taken, so that opportunities, activities are shared between the staff (and, if appropriate, among partner NGOs).

Note: As the communications strategy grows and adapts to changing priorities, more communication staff may be required. If the DPU is re-launched, it will have an impact on staffing levels beyond the scope of this strategy.

## Staffing Options

OPTION 1: Hire a Communications Coordinator

Communications is at the heart of CURE's work, so hiring a competent, experienced Communications Coordinator should be a priority.

Advantages:
- Once hired, CURE will quickly benefit from an in-house Communications Coordinator doing the important role of communications effectively.
- If a permanent/long term post is created immediately, CURE benefits from institutional knowledge and experience.

Disadvantages:
- At present there is no provision in the budget to hire a full time member of staff.
- Finding a Hastings Chikoko (with outstanding dynamism, skills and experience) may prove difficult.
- A less experienced Communications Coordinator may need training in certain communications activities.

This option is **recommended** as the best staffing option for the long term development and success of CURE's communication activities. It is critical that the chosen candidate is proactive and dynamic as these are critical requirements for the successful implementation of CURE's communication strategy.

OPTION 2: A donor hires a professional consultant to act as Communications Coordinator

This is another route to harnessing the expertise of a professional communications consultant for fast, high quality results. CORDAID has been known to hire consultants on a longer basis (six months to several years) to implement key activities and train a local counterpart.

Advantages:
- As before, once the communications consultant is in place, CURE will benefit from professional communications activities.
- The consultant can share experience and impart skills with other staff.
- CURE does not pay salary costs and could benefit from expertise than CURE could afford through direct employment.

Disadvantages:
- Limited development of institutional memory.
- May take some time to arrange.

OPTION 3: Find a volunteer Communications Coordinator

A volunteer communications coordinator could be found through WUSC, VSO or any other volunteering agency.

Advantages:
- CURE does not pay salary costs.
- The volunteer can share experience and impart skills with other staff.

Disadvantages:
- May take some time to arrange.
- Level of experience and quality of deliverables may be lower than obtainable from a professional.

OPTION 4: Share out communication tasks among staff

Advantages:
- No extra salary costs.
- Staff benefit from learning new skills.

Disadvantages:
- Without an overall communications coordinator, it is difficult to take a strategic approach, and quality of activities may suffer.
- Extra burdens placed on staff may result in CURE's other work suffering.
- Fragmented communication activities (as is currently the case) can be as bad or worse than no communication activities at all.

This option is **not recommended**, as it could lead to increased burdens on existing staff, and is likely to result in fragmented communication activities or no communications activities at all.

## 3.4 Assets

As previously discussed, the current assets of the DPU are outdated and in poor repair (see section 2.2). It is strongly recommended that they are sold, and the revenues used to offset the purchase of equipment necessary to implement CURE's communication strategy.

The following is a list of minimum requirements for the Communications Coordinator:

1. Medium spec computer cable of:
   - Burning CDs (information exchange and backups)
   - Handing large files
   - Desktop publishing
   - Internet access
   - Database management
   - Uninterruptible power supply (UPS)

2. Software
   - Updatable antivirus programme (with annual contract)
   - Desktop publishing programme
   - Database software (for contact list management)
   - ListServ software (available free on the Internet)
   - Drivers for scanner, printer, etc
   - Email and internet programmes

3. Combination fax/scanner/photocopier

4. Telephone line (preferably dedicated to the communications coordinator as s/he will need it constantly).

Consumable items such as paper, ink cartridges etc will also be required.

At a later stage, the need for additional capital assets may become apparent.

## 3.5 Budget

An indicative budget is shown overleaf. Please note that it relies on estimates, and some key information was not provided in time for the deadline of this report. Some of the budget is already funded by CORDAID and these items are marked under the “existing budget” column. The penultimate column shows the additional costs to the existing budget.

## Indicative Annual Communication Strategy Budget for CURE

| Item | Existing budget MK | Cost | | Deficit over existing budget | Source / Comment |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | MK | Time | | |
| **Recruitment costs** | | | | | |
| Advertising | - | 28,000 | | 28,000 | 1/4 page advert in Daily Times and Nation |
| Interview costs | | 72,500 | | 72,500 | per diem, transport for 5 candidates, accomodation for 2 |
| | | | | | |
| **Personnel** | | | | - | |
| Communications Coordinator | - | 724,048 | 100% | 724,048 | salary, MASM, housing allowance and leave grant (based on prog officer salary) |
| Executive director | | | 25% | - | inc 10 days "meet and greet" in yr 1 / covered by CORDAID |
| Administrator | | | 50% | - | Covered by CORDAID budget |
| Driver | | | 15% | - | Covered by CORDAID budget |
| Admin officer | | | 25% | - | Covered by CORDAID budget |
| Finance officer | | | 20% | - | Covered by CORDAID budget |
| Prog officer | | | 15% | - | Covered by CORDAID budget |
| | | | | | |
| **Capital expenditure** | | | | | |
| Computer | - | 151,739 | | 151,739 | IT Centre quote for COMPA D230MT + CD RW = US$1411.53 |
| Software | - | 62,461 | | 62,461 | IT centre quote Office XP, MS publisher, Norton antivirus |
| Fax, copier, scanner | - | 83,366 | | 83,366 | IT Centre quote HP officejet d135 US $775.50 |
| UPS | - | 31,605 | | 31,605 | IT Centre quote APS UPS 650va US $294 |
| Additional telephone line | - | 5,000 | | 5,000 | MTL quotes - installation MK1527.50; handset MK 2173.75 + surtax + additional costs |
| | | | | | |
| **Operational costs** | | | | | |
| Communications | 348,400 | 522,600 | | 174,200 | budget line C7 is MK 348,400 |
| Supplies | 237,600 | 400,000 | | 162,400 | budget line C8 is MK 237,600 |
| Additional Overheads | | 250,000 | | 250,000 | in addition to budget lines C1-5 and lines C8-10 |
| Information management (filing, contacts list etc) | - | 450,000 | | 450,000 | files / book cases / cd storage / firesafe etc |
| Monitoring and evaluation | - | 90,000 | | 90,000 | comms activities M&E |
| Communication Specific Travel and Accom. | | 180,000 | | 180,000 | in addition to budget line C6 |
| Contigency 5% | | 94,630 | | 94,630 | |
| | | | | | |
| **Information Dissemination** | | | | | |
| Newsletter production | | 128,000 | | 128,000 | quarterly, 8 page, 2 colour, production of 500 copies |
| Newsletter dissemination | | 90,000 | | 90,000 | postage @MK45 per copy |
| Electronic news and discussion groups | | 107,500 | | 107,500 | |
| Flyer production | | 25,000 | | 25,000 | 10 flyers per year, 500 copies each |
| Flyer distribution | | 125,000 | | 125,000 | postage @ MK25 per copy |
| Env Learning Centre | | 645,000 | | 645,000 | strategic expansion costs and running costs |
| Contacts lists management | | 215,000 | | 215,000 | |
| Policy briefs | | | | | no estimate could be provided from CURE |
| Contingency 5% | | 66,755 | | 66,755 | without policy brief estimate |
| | | | | | |
| **Coordination and representation of NGOs** | | | | | |
| Environmental Coordination Meetings | - | 400,000 | | 400,000 | 40 people, 2 meetings, inc venue hire, meals and refreshments, stationary, banner, transport and per diem for 8 people (inc CURE staff) |
| issue based fora | 270,000 | 400,000 | | 130,000 | budget line B2 for 270,000 based on 40 people 2 meetings |
| consultative meetings | 182,000 | 182,000 | | - | budget line B5 |
| representation in key committees | 260,000 | 260,000 | | - | budget lines B7 and B5 |
| feedback to NGOs | 195,000 | 195,000 | | - | budget line B9 |
| Contingency 5% | | 71,850 | | 71,850 | |
| | | | | | |
| **Advocacy** | | | | | |
| situation analysis/grassroots research | 100,000 | 100,000 | | - | budget line B1a |
| identification of key issues | 65,000 | 65,000 | | - | budget line B1b |
| developing advocacy strategy/coalition building | 170,000 | 170,000 | | - | budget line B3 |
| disseminiation of research results | 300,000 | 300,000 | | - | Budget line B4 |
| advocacy activities (engaging with policy makers et | 403,000 | 403,000 | | - | budget lines B8 and B9 |
| | | | | | |
| **Marketing** | - | 215,000 | | 215,000 | covers media relations and marketing activities |
| | | | | | |
| **Staff Development costs** | | 63,200 | | 63,200 | Additional staff development costs to budget lines D1-3. |
| | | | | | |
| **TOTALS** | **2,531,000** | **7,373,254** | | **4,842,254** | |

Notes:

1. This budget is indicative and relies on estimates. Due to circumstances outside the consultant's control, some key information was lacking.
2. Cumulative cost to apply (i.e. the total issue based fora cost would be MK400,000 plus 12 person days work)
3. Exchange rate used: US$1 = MK 107.50
4. Capital equipment costs could be offset by selling duplo equipment (minus selling/advertising costs)
5. Possible capacity building activities that CURE could undertake, such as advocacy or media relations trainings, have not been included in this indicative budget.

## 3.6 Plan

### Objective 1: ensure that NGOs and CBOs have a greater 'voice' in policy and programmes

**Goals**

- To give NGOs/CBOs a greater voice in policy making through providing communications opportunities for them
- To ensure that CURE activities are informed/shaped by its constituents
- To build coalitions and develop common areas of advocacy among constituents
- To influence policy makers and conduct high-level advocacy and dissemination of best practice and ideas
- To create dialogue on key issues

**Key Components**

1. Consultation

Consultation must be undertaken to develop priority areas of advocacy. This could be done through various methods, such as:

Key informant interviews

- Key informant interviews aim to get special insight from people with direct experience in the discussion topics, decision makers, policy analysis experts etc.
- The best way to conduct key informant interviews is face-to-face meetings (involving travel expense) or extended telephone discussions (the latter usually results in less rich information than a meeting).

Focus group interviews

- A facilitator guides a group (of 6-12 people) through a discussion of selected topics allowing them to talk freely, using a checklist to cover relevant points.
- Focus group discussions provide in-depth qualitative information.
- However, they can be difficult to moderate and interpret, and require a skilled facilitator for best results. If sensitive issues are discussed, a group setting may inhibit individual responses.

Surveys

- The highest response rates come from conducting the surveys in person (as shown by the recent Policy Survey). This involves travel expenses.
- Surveys can also be emailed, posted, or conducted over the phone. Printed or e-mailed surveys generally have a low response rate unless an extra incentive can be added, such as a chance to win a prize or gain free advice or services.

Vox pop interviews

- These are conducted by asking many people one or two focused questions on a topic relevant to what they are doing. (e.g. "What is your key concern about the Wildlife Policy?")
- Vox pops are a useful way to gauge trends (or differences) in opinion, but the technique does not provide in-depth qualitative data, so it is usually triangulated with another data collection method. It can be a useful way of drawing up a checklist of topics/issues/concerns for a more detailed survey or key informant interviews.
- Vox pops as quick, easy, cheap and applicable anywhere. Partners and board members could be asked to conduct vox pops, thus broadening the sphere of consultation.

## 2. Coalition building

Building coalitions is vital for effective policy advocacy. Policy makers are much more likely to listen to a united group response to policy issues than fragmented comments from different NGOs. Consensus adds weight to any advocacy activity.

Key steps for building coalitions include:

a) Identifying, researching and recruiting natural allies. When you are ready to approach a partner organization to join the coalition, be specific about their role, and look for concrete ways to tap into their strengths.

b) Broaden the coalition so that you can draw from other sector's strengths, skills and resources. It helps to add organisations with diverse interests, as this can add more legitimacy to the coalition.

c) Maintaining the coalition through:
- Developing and maintaining information flow between members (by email, phone, letter, at meetings etc);
- Agreeing advocacy objectives in a democratic, transparent manner (preferably by voting);
- Establishing structures and assigning roles and tasks, with a realistic timeline;
- Sharing responsibilities;
- Convening regular meetings to share information and continue to build and maintain the coalition.

## 3. Developing and implementing advocacy strategies

Advocacy strategies will be needed to influence policy processes and allow NGOs/CBOS to have a stronger voice in policy-making.

Key steps include:

a) Assessing whether it is something you can advocate on:
- Can you/your partners identify a clear set of feasible policy alternatives?
- Are the policy changes you propose feasible?
- Do you or a partner NGO have direct experience in the issue?

b) Drawing up and implementing the advocacy strategy:
- Gather reliable data, analyse policies and practices and media coverage.
- Define your audiences (e.g. the media, policy makers, donors, etc)
- Build your plan.
- Develop objectives.
- Assess available resources.
- Determine scope, timeline and budget.
- Target messages to different audiences.
- Deliver messages through appropriate channels.

c) Engaging with policy makers:
- Schedule face-to-face meetings.
- Participate in key policy making meetings/committees.
- Invite policy makers to see the impact of policies on the field (this can be arranged through partner NGOs).
- Keep in touch through email, phone calls and letters.

**Key Communication tools for strengthening NGO/CBO voices in policy processes**

- Newsletter (see Objective 2 below)
- Contacts List (see Objective 3 below)
- Environment Learning Centre (see section 2.2)
- Flyers/brochures (see Objective 2 below)
- ECMs (see section 2.1)
- Consultation tools (e-mailing lists, electronic discussion groups, questionnaires, personal contact in meetings etc, vox pop) (see above).

## Objective 2: Information dissemination

**Goals**

- To increase NGO/CBO access to, and understanding of, environmental and natural resource management policy issues
- To build networks (partnerships for action) through sharing information
- To facilitate effective action by provide timely, reliable information to decision makers, implementers, grassroots practitioners etc.
- To provide a forum for information exchange and dialogue on emerging key issues.

**Key Components**

Develop a clear set of information criteria for selecting data to disseminate, based on what people need (gathered in the Consultation activities in Objective 1 above). CURE will have a key role in proactively gathering reliable information from trusted sources. Be careful to ensure that only accurate, valuable and timely information is disseminated. This will involve careful checking and double-checking to ensure accuracy, and will have an impact on time and financial resources.

In the communications appraisal, key informants listed their primary information needs as:

- Policy information, preferably summarised with key areas of impact highlighted.
- Information on best practices.
- Information on who is doing what, i.e. updates of the NGO Directories (although it was pointed out that COMPASS covered this in its ListServ directory information).
- News on forthcoming policy and legislation formulations.
- Forums to debate emerging issues.

Once the information is gathered, and audiences defined, information can be packaged and delivered appropriately. It is important to match the dissemination tool with the most likely media that the audience will choose. For example, showering low-literate communities with technical, printed materials will not have much impact, whereas using entertaining traditional media, such as songs, dance, drama, story telling and radio shows can have a high impact and help spread key messages further. Table 3.1 delineates key target audiences, their main concerns, and appropriate tools to deliver information effectively.

**Table 3-1: Key Audiences, their main concerns, and effective communication tools**

| Audience | Concern/Focus | Appropriate Tools |
|---|---|---|
| Decision makers | • Budgetary implications<br>• Public opinion<br>• Opportunity to show leadership and take credit for success | • Newsletters<br>• Reports<br>• ECMs<br>• E-News |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Donors | • Cost effectiveness of interventions<br>• Ability to produce results<br>• Feasibility of integrating strategy with existing initiatives<br>• Sustainability | • Newsletter<br>• Reports<br>• ECMs<br>• E-News |
| Journalists | • News value<br>• Timing<br>• Potential controversy | • Press releases<br>• Media activities |
| Partner NGOs | • Impact on beneficiaries<br>• Accountability of NGOs<br>• Common agendas and shared vision<br>• Donor and member support | • Newsletter<br>• Reports<br>• ECMS<br>• E-News<br>• Policy Briefs<br>• Training<br>• Exchange visits |
| General public | • Response of government<br>• What policy means to me<br>• How can I benefit?<br>• What are the costs involved? | • Radio shows<br>• Traditional media (e.g. songs, poems, story telling etc)<br>• Community Meetings |

## Key information dissemination tasks

### 1. CURE Newsletter

CURE needs to re-launch its newsletter, with revised content and format. The newsletter must carry useful, timely, relevant information. Outdated or inaccurate information is useless and will portray CURE out of touch and insignificant.

**Purpose**

- An essential reference tool for environment and natural resource management actors in Malawi to help them with their work
- A tool for delivering timely, accurate, objective information for policy makers, practitioners and researchers on environment and natural resource management
- A catalyst for public participation in policy processes.

**Target audiences**

- CURE partners (NGOs and CBOs in Malawi working in environment and natural resource management issues)
- government departments and district officers
- policy makers
- donors
- field practitioners and extension workers

**Key Recommendation**

The newsletter should be re-formatted to include:

- News from non-CURE sources (for example by including round-ups of projects, activities and publications from other environment and natural resource management actors);
- Feature articles and debates exploring emerging issues;
- A calendar detailing key forthcoming meetings and events;
- Reports on meetings that CURE has attended representing other NGOs;
- Summaries of funding sources and capacity building opportunities.

**Contents**

- brief updates on CURE
- CURE partner news
- advocacy and policy issues and reports
- best practice case studies
- a calendar detailing key forthcoming meetings and events
- reports on advocacy and networking meetings
- short, pithy pieces, opinion pieces designed to stimulate debate.
- a letters page (always a good way to keep in touch with partners)
- interviews on key issues
- round ups of projects and activities related to environment and natural resource management
- feature articles and debates exploring issues with broad implications of policy and practice
- summaries of funding sources and capacity building opportunities
- short reviews and extracts of items in the environmental learning centre
- a trailer of what is coming in the next issue (to pique reader's interests)

**Frequency**: Quarterly.

**Outline of production plan**

1. Define content and plan layout, graphics and contributor's articles.
2. Get quotes from printers, select a printer and book the printing schedule.
3. Write/assign articles – giving contributors a deadline, and word length, to fit in with the production schedule.
4. Find/create graphics.
5. Edit articles or spelling, grammar, style and length. Write headlines and captions for illustrations if needed.
6. Editor approves copy/ graphics.
7. Approved text and illustrations are put into the layout.
8. Produce page proofs and have final proofread, looking for mistakes, typos, and checking design and page numbers etc.
9. Print the newsletter.
10. Mail/distribute the newsletter.
11. Follow up – thank contributors (writers), compile comments and reaction on the newsletter (for ongoing monitoring), and note comments for future issues.

**Requirements**

- Capacity requirements include: good writing and editing skills and desktop design if the newsletter is to be designed inhouse. Good people skills are needed to persuade people to contribute articles and information. A proactive approach is vital, as is attention to details – the editor should check that information provided is accurate before publishing it. The editor will also need to look after the list of subscribers/readers, updating changed addresses etc.
- The newsletter would ideally be designed in-house (necessitating desktop publishing skills) as this is the cheapest (and quickest method of design); but if the communications coordinator lacks desktop publishing skills, it could be designed and printed externally.
- Asset requirements include: a computer, software, printer, paper, ink, and a publishing house (or access to publishing or copying).
- Costs: If needed, there may be costs for capacity building to develop editorial skills, desktop publishing, and/or subscriber list management. The publishing and distribution costs will remain constant (estimated postage of 300 copies nationally and a further 50 regionally, with another 150 copies distributed by hand at meetings, exhibitions, in the resource centre etc. There will be costs involved collecting and verifying articles and information, and a small cost of managing subscribers lists.

**Recommendations**

- Although the newsletter could play a vital role in marketing, information dissemination and ensuring a voice for NGOs and CBOs in policy making, it strongly recommended that CURE does not rush into production. Capacity to produce the newsletter needs to be built up or recruited, and information gathered to produce a flagship first issue. If the first issue of the re-launched newsletter is too amateur or poor in content quality, people will not even attempt to read the second edition.
- It may be better to produce an electronic version to start with, while capacity is being built and key assets acquired.
- Stick to the production timetable, so that the newsletter is produced regularly and on time. This is important to market CURE as a dependable, reliable, trustworthy organisation.
- The newsletter should start being published on a quarterly basis. This could change when there are sufficient resources and capacity, and sufficient information to merit an increase in frequency.
- An example of a good newsletter: *CURE newsletter, vol 3 issue 1*. This includes articles on a range of subjects, some discreet inhouse advertising, a number of different writers, letters to the editor. It is a good source of information on CURE's activities and environmental/NRM issues in Malawi. The design is of reasonable quality and the printing is good.
- An example of a poor newsletter: *CURE newsletter vol 5, issue 3*. This contains no substantive content and all of the articles are written by CURE staff. It does not market CURE, and in fact portrays CURE as amateur in its approach and inconsequential. The design is poor (with too many different distracting fonts and boxes crowding the pages) and print quality is poor.
- The CURE newsletter should be redesigned, so that when the first issue is launched, people do not dismiss it as CURE's newsletter which had become poor quality and insignificant. This redesign include a new name (for example a Chichewa name) and look, although of course it will have to be branded as a CURE product on the front, back or editorial listing.

**Potential to generate income**

- In the long term there is potential to cover costs through subscriptions or membership fees.
- In the medium term there is the ability to generate business for CURE (consultancies, grants and contracts) through the newsletter's role in marketing the organisation.

## 2. E-News and discussion lists:

**Purpose**

- CURE should coordinate a number of e-news and discussion lists, to promote debate and discussion on emerging issues.

**Contents**

- Updated profiles of partner organisations could also be shared in this forum (i.e. updates on the NGO Directories).
- Debate and discussion on key emerging issues. Questions could be posed by the moderator to stimulate debate.

**Recommendation**

- It is critical that efforts are made to minimise the spread of computer viruses through your discussion groups. CURE must have regularly updated antivirus software (updated at least twice a week), and recommend that people who send messages to the list don't include attachments, but rather include their responses in the text of the emails.

There are two main approaches to running an electronic discussion group: moderated and un-moderated:

**Moderated** means that the moderator (an individual assigned to the task) has to approve each email before it gets sent out to the mailing list. This means you can avoid sending on viruses, can keep discussions on the subject, and make sure there are no unauthorised postings (e.g. adverts, spam, or antisocial emails). This approach is **highly recommended**, although it is more time-consuming as each email must be checked that its content is appropriate and not offensive, virus scanned and approved before posting. Emails can sent on individually or collated into digests, which are sent periodically to all the subscribers.

**Un-moderated** email lists mean that when a contributor sends a message to the list, the mailing list management software re-mails the message to all subscribers immediately, without anyone checking the content. This approach is less successful as there can be a lot of information sent that is irrelevant to the discussion, and people tend to unsubscribe to the lists more often than moderated ones.

Free software is available on the internet for compiling, maintaining and moderating electronic discussion groups. In addition, there are free services such as yahoo groups (www.yahoogroups.com) with their own user-friendly software, so that list updating, moderating emails etc. can all be done free of charge, online.

**Outline electronic discussion group production plan**

- Pick a “hot” topic (something that everyone is talking about, an emerging key issue).
- Invite board members and a few partners to briefly write their view on the topic. (It may help if you pose controversial questions to stimulate debate).
- Ensure that people do not send attachments (with the risk of spreading computer viruses around), but put forward their point of view in a short message.
- Encourage others to respond to messages giving their viewpoints/experience and analysis of the issue.
- Separately, ask partners for up-to-date contact details, profile and current activities, and include one update in each mailing.
- Workshop/meeting schedules and training opportunities could also be disseminated with these postings.
- Get more ideas on keeping it short, interactive and relevant by copying discussion groups that you like.
- Remember that not all your constituents have access to email, so explore ways of including them, e.g. by sending them regular summarised print outs of discussion groups.

**Potential to generate income**

If the list becomes successful, there could be ways to generate small revenues through

- Charging subscribers for receiving the email lists (not recommended as they may not find the information useful enough to warrant paying subscription fees)
- Carrying job advertisements, and paid conference/workshop/training announcements.

## 3. Flyers

Flyers are simple publications (usually one side of a single sheet of paper) designed to get a specific message across to a group of people, often in a short time.

Flyers are useful way of spreading a simple message, and it is important that you do not attempt to convey too much information through a flyer. If the information to be passed on is complex, then another format might be more appropriate (e.g. an article in the newsletter, a brochure or a media campaign). It is better to produce several flyers, each devoted to a particular aspect of the key issue, than to try and cram information about several aspects in one flyer.

Consider how the flyers will be distributed. For example, if it is to be folded for mailing, this will affect the design as it affects the look of the brochure.

**Purpose**

- To share information
- To promote your point of view (i.e. advocacy)
- To publicise an event (or new publication, activity or service)
- Campaign materials should include information about the campaign, powerful facts and figures, a short case study, a list of what the reader can do, and contact details for further information

**Requirements**

- Capacity requirements include: good writing and editing skills and desktop design if the newsletter is to be designed inhouse.
- Asset requirements include: a computer, software, printer, paper, ink, and a publishing house (or access to publishing or copying).
- Costs: If needed, there may be costs for capacity building to develop editorial skills. Design costs, and costs of publishing and dissemination will be needed (much lower than the costs of the newsletter, as the design is very simple).

**Production Schedule**

- Similar to the newsletter production schedule above.

**Potential to generate income**

- This depends on the purpose of the publication, if the flyer or leaflet is selling something directly (such as a directory), then income generating potential is linked to that product.
- If the flyer is not advertising anything directly, the leaflet could still generate revenues indirectly, through leading to increased opportunities for partnership, funding and capacity training.

### 4. Environmental Learning Centre

See Section 2.2 for recommendations on expanding the Environmental Learning Centre.

### 5. Placing information in Mass Media

Mass media can be an excellent way of information dissemination to:

- The general public; and
- Decision makers, experts and people who influence policy-making (from the government, donor agencies, and other NGOs).

In future, CURE may have the resources to produce their own mass media communication campaigns (i.e. pay for the production of a specific radio show or regular TV spot).

In the meanwhile, it is more cost effective to place articles in publications, or provide speakers and information for radio shows. See Table 3-2 below for examples of media that could be used to disseminate special information.

**Table 3-2: Sample Media Outlets for disseminating CURE Information**

| | |
|---|---|
| National Newsletters<br>• *WESM*<br>• *TSP*<br>• *CONGOMA*<br>• *Forestry – Conserve up Trees and Forests*<br>• *Sapitwa* (MMCT)<br>• *Agritech News* (Department of Agricultural Research Services)<br>• *MASIP* (Malawi Agriculture Sector Investment Process)<br>• *Living with trees in Southern Africa* (ICRAF) | Regional Newsletters<br>• *The Zambezi*<br>• *Yonge Nawe*<br>• *Ground Up*<br>• *Forest, Trees and People*<br>• *Land and Rural Digest* |
| Radio stations/shows<br>• MBC - *You and the Environment*<br>• Power 101<br>• Capital FM<br>• Dzimwe Community Radio - Mangochi | Newspapers<br>• *Daily Times*<br>• *Nation Newspaper*<br>• *Weekly News*<br>• *Mail and Guardian* (South Africa) |
| TV<br>• TV Malawi | |

**Key Steps**

**1. Select the target media outlets according the audience you want to reach:**

- Newsletters are the best way to reach people in your sector (i.e. environment and development NGOs, donor agencies, and government staff).
- Newspapers are a good tool for high-level advocacy as they are read by decision makers, particularly government staff and donor agencies, as well as directors of NGOs.
- The radio may be the best way to reach the general public with environmental/policy messages, depending on what time the show is broadcast.
- TV may also reach decision makers if the programmes are in peak viewing times.

2. **Research the media outlet:**

- If it is a publication – What kind of articles do they have (e.g. news items, features, investigative journalism, regular departments on key issues etc). How long are the articles, and what kind of research do they prefer (e.g. field experience, quotes from experts, references to academic journals etc.)? What kind of tone does the publication take (witty, practical, intellectual etc.)? In particular look at the cover story, as these are considered the most important and show the publication's priorities. Assess the percentage of freelance contributions, and the writer's qualifications. Are they all scientists? What are the magazine's regular departments, and are any of them written by freelancers (i.e. non staff writers)?
- For radio or TV – listen to/watch the appropriate shows, noticing what issues they cover and how. Do they do interviews or phone-ins (in which case CURE could find a speaker on a key issue), or does a journalist visit field sites and discuss items with people in villages (in which case CURE could arrange a field visit to a partner NGO site); or does the show contain debates (in which case CURE could find a speaker – an expert or someone with direct experience to offer)?

**3. Plan your contribution:**

- For any media outlet, consider coming up with 'sound bites' on the issue, and covering 3-5 main points. Sometimes you will only have time to cover one, so make sure you start with the most important one.

- For all media outlets, plan WHAT the subject message is; WHY you think the piece would be of interest to readers/listeners; WHERE the information in the piece comes from and how you can back up your main points with examples and stories from the field; HOW you plan to organize your information (the structure of an article or the main points you want to get across on the radio).

**4. Pitch your idea to the editor/producer:**

- Call the editor or radio show producer with your idea. Remember they are interested in new angles or new findings, so emphasise anything relevant in the first call. Explain who the speaker is (or writer) and why they would be a good person to feature (e.g. they have firsthand experience of…). Keep it simple when explaining the main points you want to get across.
- If the editor/producer says no, don't give up too easily. Ask if s/he has any further suggestions as to where this material might be covered or if they would be interested in another angle on the topic.

**6. Place the item in the chosen media:**

- Stick to time/word length limits, and make sure you keep messages simple, tailored to the audience. (e.g. if it is academic journal, you can use scientific arguments without explaining them too much, but if it is a radio show for rural farmers, keep it simple.)

**7. Keep clippings or recordings of your show** (ask the editor or producer to send you one) for CURE's archives, and possible use in marketing campaigns.

**Requirements**

- Capacity requirements include: good writing and editing skills and people skills (to develop relationships with editors/producers).
- Asset requirements include: a computer, software, printer, paper, ink, and a publishing house (or access to publishing or copying).
- Costs: If needed, there may be costs for capacity building to develop editorial skills. Considerable time may be needed for planning and placing information in media outlets. There will be communication costs in terms of telephone calls, printing out drafts, travel to the radio studio (if appropriate) etc.

**Potential to generate income**

- Some publications pay a fee for published articles, but it is not likely to be the case for newsletters or small publications, and the fees are usually only small.
- It is not usual to pay for radio interviews or TV appearances.
- However, placing information in the media may generate income in the form of follow up grants or consultancies, through raising the profile of CURE.

## Key Communication Tools for Information Dissemination

- Policy Briefs (see Section 2.1)
- Environment Learning Centre (see Section 2.2)
- Newsletter (see above)
- Contacts list (see Objective 3 below)
- ECMS (See Section 2.1)
- Web site (See section 2.1).

## Objective 3: Marketing CURE

**Goals:**

- To help CURE acquire legitimacy as the coordinating NGO for environmental and natural resource management issues in Malawi
- To raise CURE's profile, to attract more partnerships (thus strengthen its voice and bring added legitimacy)
- To attract donors/partners/ cost sharers

**Key Components**

1. Ensure CURE is marketable

For this CURE a clear sense of purpose and direction, and key priority action areas broken down into achievable steps in the workplan. See the first Key Recommendation in section 2.3.

2. Build CURE's image

Ensure that everything that CURE does helps to build its image as a professional, committed NGO, working as a catalyst for public participation in policy processes. Everything CURE does should increase confidence in its business.

3. Meet and greet campaign

Start with the Director doing a "**meet and greet" campaign**, to meet directors of partner organisations, government departments, and donors, outlining CURE's strategy and goals and asking for support (whether encouragement or resources) and partnership where appropriate.

4. CURE ambassadors

The board of Governors should become ambassadors for CURE. This means that where opportunities arise, they could outline CURE's new role, look out for opportunities for publicity and funding, and partnerships. See Key Recommendations in Section 2.3.

5. Be proactive

Keep on proactively contacting people and follow up after you have met them. Every time you contact someone, they become more involved with CURE. When people are involved you only have to whisper to get their attention; if they are not involved, you have to shout.

6. Help your partners

Help partners and they will reciprocate. Making links and referrals to other organisations will help expand your marketing, as well as sharing opportunities among partner organisations. Don't link too much with companies whose products/standards are less good than yours. (Try them out for two months and if the arrangement doesn't help you, choose others to be referred instead.)

## 7. Contacts list

This is essential for CURE if it is going to position itself successfully as a coordinating organisation.

**Purpose**
- To help CURE be more effective and efficient in its work
- To share profiles of other organisations working in environment/natural resource management.

**Recommendations**
- Accuracy is vital in maintaining a database or contacts list – check the spelling, phone numbers, email addresses. If the database contains wrong information, it is useless.
- Be proactive in updating your contacts list, so that you have the correct details when you need them. Periodically, say every quarter, the communications coordinator should call newspapers and radio stations to check who is new and who has left.
- Record the last date of update, so you can tell when you last verified the address.
- How the list is kept (in terms of software – whether Excel, Access, or Microsoft Word) doesn't matter in the early stages. Don't be technology led; make sure the information is useful and accessible to everyone who will need to use it.

**Sourcing contact information**
- Business cards collected at meetings should be given to the contacts list database manager. (After recording their details, they can be returned to the person who collected them).
- Ask partners/board members for their lists to merge into CURE's master contacts lists.
- Use existing lists e.g. the Zambezi State of the Environment list.
- Use registration lists at meetings convened by CURE.

**Requirements**
- Basic software
- Time: Allocate staff time to gathering and listing contacts. It is time consuming to maintain and update the contacts list, but this must be done regularly and on an ongoing basis. If the list contains outdated or wrong information, it is useless.

**Potential for generating income**
- When the information is compiled, a directory could be produced and sold as before. As directories are expensive to produce, another organisation or donor could sponsor this activity.
- If other directories exist, CURE must have the competitive advantage to sell their version. This would mean ensuring that the contacts database is the most up-to-date, most accurate and most relevant.

## 8. Media Relations

**Purpose**
- To market CURE
- To raise awareness of key policy issues

**Target audiences**
- Radio – grassroots, also government and actors
- Press and newsletters - decision makers, other actors in field, government, donors
- TV – decision makers, other actors in field

**Media contacts list**

- This is a key resource for successful media relations. The contacts list should be compiled in a manner that makes searching for contacts easy. If a journalist has a specialist area (e.g. politics or environmental issues), include that in the contacts list so that you can call up journalists according to what they cover.
- Be proactive in updating media contacts list, so that you have the correct details when you need them. Periodically, say every quarter, the communications coordinator should call newspapers and radio stations to check who is new and who has left and verify email addresses and phone and fax numbers.

**Outline of production plan**

- Someone needs to be designated as taking the lead for media relations.
- Have an inhouse brainstorm on future opportunities for media relations. Develop simple messages you want to pass on. These could be drawn from best practice – for example, "bee keeping produces more money than charcoal and saves trees" or "plant a fruit tree this tree planting day and enjoy the fruits of your labours."
- Proactively use newspegs (see Table 3.3 below) to attract media coverage. For example, CURE should release press releases in the run up to key days every year, such as National Tree Planting Day, World Environment Day etc. Press releases could also be issued in the run up to key meetings and events being held (e.g. a high level ECM). See the Media Relations Tool for more details.
- Draw on the expertise and experience of partner organisations and board members – they could be the spokespeople for CURE or representing their own organisations. CURE does not have to feature in all the media relations activities – it might be more important to publicise an action (e.g. advocacy) than CURE – so sometimes media relations activities could be led by other organisations. CURE could help small NGOs in their media relations activities as part of capacity building.
- Keep a news clippings book – with details of date published and the name of the publication. This is a useful marketing tool (if relevant, news clippings can be sent with donor proposals).
- Keep a news release file (copies of all news releases issued), along with list of who and where sent.
- Build relationships with journalists. This can get you good coverage, especially on controversial issues. Develop credibility by being accurate, respecting your adversaries, and not exaggerating.
- Follow up all media activities. Don't just send a letter to the editor and wait for it to be published. Call and check that it arrived, that the editor/reporter understands it, ask what you can do to get it published (e.g. does it need to be shorter?). Call again when it's published, thanking them. Keep in touch and build the relationship.
- Write press releases when you have some news to say e.g. you have uncovered an issue and this is what you are going to do about it. Don't send one out if there is not much news.
- A warning – attracting media attention can also lead to negative media coverage – journalists love controversy.

**How to produce a news release**

- Lead with a newsworthy angle, interesting statistic, or grabbing quote, or a way to show what it means to people on the ground.
- Include the 5 Ws (who, what, when, where, why, and how) but not necessarily in the first paragraph, as that can make the text a bit dull.
- Make the text brief and snappy, using clear, positive language, short words and sentences. Use action verbs (eg "CURE is fighting to ban methyl bromide.") rather than passive ones ("methyl bromide should be banned.")
- Ensure that all the text is relevant, and stick to the essentials. Don't explain everything, just enough for the public to understand. Cut out all padding, hyperbole, and superlatives.
- Include a quote that is colourful, thought provoking or catchy.
- Don't issue a press release if it is not news-worthy, or you have nothing much to say.
- Lay it out professionally, double spaced, and don't forget to include contact details for CURE spokespeople.

**Table 3.3: Example newspegs (i.e. items and events that are news-worthy)**

- Landmarks – the 3000th person to sign the petition, another MK10,000 raised etc.
- Anniversaries – your tenth anniversary, World Environment Day, etc.
- New services
- Publications
- New premises
- Predictions (of future trends)
- Announcements – new plans to tackle environmental degradation etc.
- Issues – CURE campaigns on ____
- Events – open days, fundraising activities, meetings

**Requirements**

- Budgeting - News conferences can be expensive and are not appropriate if you have little or nothing to say (or there are more significant news stories that journalists are focusing on). Cheaper options are press releases, or calling journalists with story ideas. You can also place articles in publications, offer a speaker radio shows (see Objective 2 above) or write a letter to the editor of a publication.
- Capacity – it is vital that the communications coordinator has media relations experience, or is trained before attempting to contact the media.

**Potential to generate income**

- Positive media coverage will raise CURE's profile, increasing its impact on decision makers, attracting donors and partners, and possibly leading to contracts, consultancies, etc.
- However, negative media coverage could lead to partners distancing themselves from CURE, and government and donors withdrawing support.

**Key Communications Tools for Marketing CURE**

- CURE Newsletter (See above)
- Web site (see 2.1 above)
- Flyers, leaflets and brochures (see above)
- Media relations activities (see above)
- Contacts list (see above)
- Using the board of governance as a resource (see 2.3)

## 3.7 Monitoring and Evaluation

CURE's communication activities should be monitored as an ongoing process, with the staff and board members being encouraged to report relevant comments to the Communications Coordinator.

Simple ways to evaluate communication activities include:

- Introducing short, easy evaluation forms for ECM attendees (an added incentive would be that travel allowances will not be reimbursed until the questionnaires are completed).
- Simple subscriber feedback for the newsletter could be done annually or biannually. This could also be done for e-news and electronic discussion papers, or regular publications. Incentives could be offered such as entry into a draw for a free publication, CD ROM, T-shirt, etc.

- Annually, or more often, CURE staff and board members should phone a number of partner organisations (say two or three each) and ask them key questions on CURE's communication activities.

**Key Questions**

- **Reach -** Are the right people receiving the information (is any key category of people or organisation being excluded)? How could CURE's reach be improved?
- **Quality of Information -** is the information that CURE provides timely, accurate and reliable? How could it be improved?
- **Relevance of Information -** is the information relevant to the audience?
- **Format -** is the format appropriate to the audience?
- **Effectiveness -** how effective is the information? Is your advocacy material persuasive?
- **Understandable -** do readers/listeners understand the information? Are the policy changes you suggest feasible?
- **Duplication -** Can readers/listeners/partners get the same information anywhere else? If so, which source of information do they find more useful and why?

# References

CURE (December 2001): *Remembering the Baboon: CURE Strategic Plan 2002-2005*

CURE (March 2002): *Strategic Framework for NGO Involvement in Decentralised Environmental Management*

Environmental Affairs Department (October 2000): *Rocks Grow: Environmental Communications Strategy, Lake Chilwa Wetland Project, Danida Environmental Sector Support Programme Support Component.*

Nangoma, Everhart and Munthali, Ulemu (December 2003): *Situation Analysis/Baseline Survey on NGO/CBOs' Involvement in Policy Processes*
CURE

Sambo, E.Y. (September 2001): *End of Term Evaluation of the Co-ordination Unit for the Rehabilitation of the Environment (CURE)*
COMPASS International Report 13

Sneed, Theo V. (July 2000) *A Strategic Framework for CBNRM Media Campaigns in Malawi*
COMPASS Document 15

# Annex 1. Scope of Work

SCOPE OF WORK - Develop a Communications Strategy for CURE

| | |
|---|---|
| Proposed Personnel: | Juliet Le Breton |
| Number of Days: | 18 |
| Position: | Communications Specialist |
| Period of Performance: | 11/01/2003 to 01/31/2004 |
| Purpose: | To review the current communications and public awareness strategy of CURE and make recommendations for a new strategy for the next three years in keeping with CURE's overall strategy and funding |

**SUMMARY**:

The Malawian NGO CURE has requested COMPASS support to undertake a review of the need and opportunities for revitalizing the Communications Department that has become all but defunct over the past year or two. In view of the importance of this department to the ability of CURE to fulfill a significant part of its mandate (as outlined in its strategic plan for 2002 to 2005), COMPASS feels that this is a valuable initiative. Since CURE was able to develop, translate and disseminate a series of natural resource policy briefs through COMPASS grant support, we believe this has set a precedent that can help move the NGO away from total donor dependence that has put its existence in jeopardy ever since it was created over ten years ago. If the Communications Department can implement a strategy that enables it to undertake performance-based commercial contracts with the private sector as well as donor organizations, it will set a precedent that should help move CURE away from donor dependence.

**Background/Justification**

The Coordination Unit for the Rehabilitation of the Environment (CURE) is a Malawian Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) established in 1994. In 2001, COMPASS assisted CURE develop a strategic plan for the period 2002 – 2005 (COMPASS Internal Report 13: End-of-Term Evaluation of the Co-ordination Unit for the Rehabilitation of the Environment (CURE). In this strategic plan, CURE outlined three areas of strategic focus, namely:

Popular participation in policy processes
Policy dissemination; and
Capacity building

In 2002 and 2003, CURE received a COMPASS grant that enabled the organization to undertake some seminal work in the first two of these areas through the development, translation and dissemination of natural resource policy briefs. In the past, CURE also facilitated the implementation of environmental micro-projects, developed an NGO strategy for Decentralized Environmental Management and acted as the non-governmental focal point for an array of environmental and natural resource management matters.

Central to CURE has, until lately, been the Communication Department whose primary responsibilities have been:

Organization of Environmental Coordination Meetings;
Promotion of national and regional networking among NGOs, CBOs, government and donors;
Design publications and dissemination of environmental data/information;
Development of project proposals;

Management of an Environmental Learning and Resource Centre;
Provision of support to other CURE's programs;
Preparation and submission of quarterly reports;
Marketing of CURE activities to other NGOs and CBOs;
Liaison with other NGOs and government on on-going environmental and NRM activities and technical support needs.

Owing to financial difficulties during 2002 and early 2003 that resulted in significant staff turnover, the Communication Department has largely been inactive despite its importance to achieving CURE's objectives. At this time it is essentially nonexistent. CURE is now attempting to resuscitate the Communications Department with renewed support from a variety of donor organizations (notably CORDAID) and is looking for technical assistance to undertake a strategic assessment of opportunities and needs.

In view of the lessons learned in the not too distant past, it is essential that the revitalized Communications Department plays a key role in moving CURE as an organization away from total reliance on donors. Past strategies and plans have mooted this but the organization has never been able to put the strategy in place. The example of the grant-funded work with COMPASS sets a precedent that the new management at CURE should strive to repeat. Other examples that might be emulated are provided by the Wildlife and Environmental Society's Environmental Publishing Unit that aims to become an income generating venture and the Development Centre's efforts in undertaking information dissemination on a for-fee basis.

**Objective:**

A revitalized Communications Department within CURE that performs a strategic role in promoting CURE's activities and achieving results outlined in the strategic plan (2002 to 2005). A business plan that outlines how the Communications Department will contribute to CURE's financial sustainability and independence.

**Tasks:**

Review the mandate and scope of work of the Communications Department and examine opportunities and needs for modifying the Communication Department's role and responsibilities within CURE;
Advise CURE on the financing and staffing of the Communication Department in view of the current and likely future conditions;
Come up with a communications strategy and an implementation plan including a detailed business plan based on potential options.

The Consultant will be required to present the strategy and recommendations to CURE's management and its board.

**Outputs and Deliverables:**

A report detailing the mandate and options for future roles and responsibilities of CURE's Communications Department. The report should clearly spell out strategic options for revitalizing the department and for ensuring its financial sustainability. Staffing needs and initial budget requirements should be detailed in a business plan for the department.

**Work Schedule and Reporting Relationship:**

The technical assistant will report to Andrew Watson, the COMPASS Chief of Party or Nobel Moyo, the Acting Chief of Party.

Day 1: Meet with CURE staff and COMPASS to review the scope of work and refine the implementation plan.

Days 2 to 4: Meet CURE Board members and review the 2002 to 2005 strategy and other relevant materials that outline past successes and weaknesses of the CURE Communications Department.

Days 5 to 8: Meet other NGOs and potential partners and clients to identify a clear role for the Communications Department based on existing and future needs within CURE and among clients.

Days 9 to 14: Develop a draft strategy and business plan for the department.

Days 15 and 16: Present the draft strategy to the CURE Board (and to COMPASS). Note that CURE will cover any costs associated with this event.

Days 17 and 18: Finalize the report that spells out the strategy and business plan for CURE's revitalized Communications Department.

**Qualifications:**

Experience in developing and implementing communication strategies and plans for organizations. Thorough understanding of the institutional landscape in the non-governmental sector (NGOs and donors) with regard to environment and natural resources in Malawi. Familiarity with CURE and other communications NGOs in Malawi (for example CRECCOM, Story Workshop Educational Trust and others).

# Annex 2. List of Key Informants

The following people were interviewed for this assignment:

- Chris Mwambene, CURE
- Maggie O'Toole, Concern Universal
- William Chadza, WESM
- Emmanuel Mlaka, Enterprise Development and Training Agency (EDETA)
- Daulos Mauambeta, WESM
- Carl Bruessow, Mulanje Mountain Conservation Trust
- Nobel Moyo, COMPASS
- Rick James, International NGO Training and Research Centre (INTRAC)
- Fumakazi Munthali, Oxfam
- Tikhala Chibwana, Malawi Environment Endowment Trust
- Alastair Anton, EU Social Forestry Programme, Ministry of Forestry
- Wellings Simwela, Assistant Director of Forestry
- Raphael Kabwaza, Director of Environmental Affairs
- John Balarin, Danish Hunters Association
- Charles Gondwe, Forestry Publicity Officer, Ministry of Forestry
- Deusdediti Peter Kafere, Environmental Education and Outreach, Environmental Affairs Department
- Melton Luhanga, Churches Action in Relief and Development (CARD)
- Mark Boulton, International Centre for Conservation Education (ICCE)
- Ulemu Munthali, CURE
- Everhart Nangoma, CURE
- Zikani Kaunda, CRECCOM

# Annex 3. Other Communication Tools

A list of other communication tools, which could be added to CURE's communication strategy at a later stage (they are not essential in the short term):

- Open Days – when members/constituents can visit the Environment Learning Centre, and look around the CURE offices and meet the staff. This is a way to strengthen relationships with partners.
- Advocacy Training (other conducted by CURE staff, or through an external trainer)
- Media Relations Training (other conducted by CURE staff, or through an external trainer)
- Awards for journalists with the best coverage of environmental/natural resource management issues
- Annual reports
- Radio competitions are a good way to get information and consult the general public.
- Information Dissemination Contracts, similar to current initiative for being a focal point for SARDC. This could be a creative way to address cost sharing.
- Lunch time seminars and debates – when external speakers speak on a topic or debates while staff and partners would bring their own packed lunch.

# Annex 4. Communications Coordinator Job Description and Person Profile

**Position:** Communications Coordinator

## Main Function

The Communications Coordinator is responsible for proactively implementing a comprehensive communications strategy with three main objectives:

1. Ensuring that NGOs and CBOs have a greater voice in policy and programmes
2. Information dissemination and raising awareness on key natural resource management issues and policies
3. Marketing CURE nationally (and to a lesser extent regionally) to raise the profile of the organization, attract donors and partners.

## Key Responsibilities

### 1 Strategic

- Proactively implement and evaluate the Communications Strategy for CURE.
- Advise the Executive Director and senior staff on communications-related issues, both external and internal.
- As part of the senior management team, work on the development and implementation of the organisation's overall strategy.

### 2 Management

- As a senior member of staff, the post holder will form part of a senior management team that meets regularly to discuss issues related to the Programme's direction and management.
- The Communications Coordinator is responsible for management and administration of CURE's communications function. This will involve building on communications strategies as part of CURE's overall strategy and developing and implementing annual work plans and budgets; monitoring and reporting on activities, expenditure and outputs.
- With CURE management team and Board of Governance, fundraise for communications and advocacy activities and act as the liaison person with donor agencies.
- Liaise with the Board of Governance to help them market CURE, ensure that information they pass on to CURE is utilised efficiently and opportunities created by the Board of Governance are used productively.

### 3 Communications and advocacy

- Work with CURE management team and Board of Governance to plan and implement communication activities.
- Develop an active relationship with the media, establishing contacts, selecting relevant topics and angles to promote, and running media relations activities.
- Oversee the strategic direction of commissioning, editing and production of cross-cutting news items, feature articles and reports, and advise programmes on the production and dissemination of communications materials.
- Oversee consultation to select key advocacy areas, coalition building and the development and implementation of advocacy strategies, including organising meetings, sharing information and media relations activities as needed.

- Play a key role in creating and sharing opportunities for partner organisations and CURE to be featured in radio and TV broadcasts, as well as providing articles or interviews for publication in key newsletters and newspapers.

### 4 Information management

- Oversee the development and enhancement of user-friendly CURE mailing lists and databases, improving the organisation's ability to handle contact lists efficiently, accurately target information to relevant audiences and maintain information quality.
- Provide technical support and expertise in the areas of communications and information management to the Environmental Learning Centre.
- Provide support and guidance for improved information management systems within CURE.

### 5 Publications and electronic mailings

- Oversee the co-ordination, direction and management of the CURE print and electronic publications programme, with the aim of maximising the impact and reach of CURE publications.
- Responsible for entire production of key communications materials, including the quarterly newsletter, flyers and brochures and electronic news briefs and discussion groups.
- Responsible for the entire production process from gathering and compiling information (or commissioning contributions) to supervising design, layout, production and dissemination.

### 6 Marketing

- Ensure that CURE projects a strong, clear and consistent image that reinforces its professional committed NGO working as a catalyst for public participation in policy processes.
- Advise and oversee activities that market CURE such as media relations, networking and coordination meetings, etc.

## Person Profile

The successful candidate will have:

- Minimum of 5 years' experience in responsible positions relevant to this post.
- Self-motivated and innovative; able to work under pressure, meet tight deadlines and successfully manage a number of communications activities simultaneously.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills in English. Knowledge of one or more vernacular languages would be an advantage.
- High level of competence in media liaison, publication production, and editing. Desktop design skills would be an advantage.
- Knowledge of on-line communications including the development of electronic mailing lists and discussion groups.
- Good organisational skills and proven abilities in administration and management.
- Good inter-personal skills, including ability to transfer skills, supervise and network and facilitate a team based approach.
- Good understanding of current environment and natural resource management issues, strategies and policies. Knowledge and understanding of CURE's work would be an advantage.
- Ability to take a participative, consultative approach, prioritise key issues and maintain focus on priority issues.
- Experience in advocacy and coalition building.
- Ability to organise meetings and conferences.

# Annex 5. List of COMPASS Publications

| Document Number | Title | Author(s) | Date |
|---|---|---|---|
| Document 1 | COMPASS Year 1 Work Plan | COMPASS | Jul-99 |
| Document 2 | COMPASS Small Grants Management Manual | Umphawi, A., Clausen, R., Watson, A. | Sep-99 |
| Document 3 | Year 2 Annual Work Plan | COMPASS | Dec-99 |
| Document 4 | July 1 - September 30, 1999: Quarterly Report | COMPASS | Oct-99 |
| Document 5 | Training Needs Assessment: Responsive Modules & Training Approach | Mwakanema, G. | Nov-99 |
| Document 6 | Guidelines and Tools for Community-Based Monitoring | Svendsen, D. | Nov-99 |
| Document 7 | Policy Framework for CBNRM in Malawi: A Review of Laws, Policies and Practices | Trick, P. | Dec-99 |
| Document 8 | Performance Monitoring for COMPASS and for CBNRM in Malawi | Zador, M. | Feb-00 |
| Document 9 | October 1 - December 31, 1999: Quarterly Report | COMPASS | Jan-00 |
| Document 10 | Workshop on Principles and Approaches for CBNRM in Malawi: An assessment of needs for effective implementation of CBNRM | Watson, A. | Mar-00 |
| Document 11 | January 1 - March 31, 2000: Quarterly Report | COMPASS | Apr-00 |
| Document 12 | Thandizo la Ndalama za Kasamalidwe ka Zachilengedwe (Small Grants Manual in Chichewa) | Mphaka, P. | Apr-00 |
| Document 13 | Njira Zomwe Gulu Lingatsate Powunikira Limodzi Momwe Ntchito Ikuyendera (Guidelines and Tools for Community-based Monitoring in Chichewa) | Svendsen, D. - Translated by Mphaka, P. and Umphawi, A. | May-00 |
| Document 14 | Grass-roots Advocacy for Policy Reform: The Institutional Mechanisms, Sector Issues and Key Agenda Items | Lowore, J. and Wilson, J. | Jun-00 |
| Document 15 | A Strategic Framework for CBNRM Media Campaigns in Malawi | Sneed, T. | Jul-00 |
| Document 16 | Training Activities for Community-based Monitoring | Svendsen, D. | Jul-00 |
| Document 17 | April 1 - June 30, 2000: Quarterly Report | COMPASS | Jul-00 |
| Document 18 | Crocodile and Hippopotamus Management in the Lower Shire | Kalowekamo, F. | Sep-00 |
| Document 19 | Cost-Sharing Principles and Guidelines for CBNRM Activities | Moyo, N. | Sep-00 |
| Document 20 | Work plan: 2001 | COMPASS | Nov-00 |
| Document 21 | July 1 - September 30, 2000: Quarterly Report | COMPASS | Oct-00 |
| Document 22 | Opportunities for Sustainable Financing of CBNRM in Malawi: A Discussion | Watson, A. | Nov-00 |
| Document 23 | Framework for Strategic Planning for CBNRM in Malawi | Simons, G. | Nov-00 |

| Document Number | Title | Author(s) | Date |
|---|---|---|---|
| Document 24 | Kabuku Kakwandula Ndondomeko ya Thumba Lapadera la Wupu wa COMPASS (ChiTumbuka version of the COMPASS Small-grant Manual) | Umphawi, A., Clausen, R. & Watson, A. Translated by Chirwa, T.H. & Kapila, M. | Dec-00 |
| Document 25 | COMPASS Performance and Impact: 1999/2000 | COMPASS | Nov-00 |
| Document 26 | October 1 - December 31, 2000: Quarterly Report | COMPASS | Jan-01 |
| Document 27 | COMPASS Grantee Performance Report | Umphawi, A. | Mar-01 |
| Document 28 | January 1 - March 31, 2001: Quarterly Report | COMPASS | Apr-01 |
| Document 29 | Natural Resource Based Enterprises in Malawi: Study on the contribution of NRBEs to economic development and community-based natural resource management in Machinga District | Lowore, J. | Apr-01 |
| Document 30 | Proceedings of the First National Conference on CBNRM in Malawi | Kapila, M., Shaba, T., Chadza, W., Yassin, B. and Mikuwa, M. | Jun-01 |
| Document 31 | Natural Resource Based Enterprises in Malawi: Action Plans | Watson, A. | Jun-01 |
| Document 32 | Examples of CBNRM Best Practices in Malawi | Moyo, N. & Epulani, F. | Jun-01 |
| Document 33 | Media Training for CBNRM Public Awareness | Kapila, M. | Jun-01 |
| Document 34 | April 1 - June 30, 2001: Quarterly Report | COMPASS | Jul-01 |
| Document 35 | Strategic Plan for CBNRM in Malawi | CBNRM Working Group | Sep-01 |
| Document 36 | Work plan: 2002 | COMPASS | Oct-01 |
| Document 37 | July 1 - September 30, 2001: Quarterly Report | COMPASS | Oct-01 |
| Document 38 | COMPASS Performance and Impact: 2000/2001 | COMPASS | Dec-01 |
| Document 39 | Coordination of CBNRM in Malawi: Financing Options | Watson, A. | Jan-02 |
| Document 40 | Performance Monitoring for CBNRM in Malawi | CBNRM Working Group | Oct-02 |
| Document 41 | October 1 – December 31, 2001: Quarterly Report | COMPASS | Jan-02 |
| Document 42 | COMPASS Field Level Training Impact Evaluation | Moyo, N. | Feb-02 |
| Document 43 | COMPASS Grantee Performance Report: 2001 | Umphawi, U. | Apr-02 |
| Document 44 | COMPASS Assessment: 2001 | Sambo, E., Carr, S., Omambia, D. & Moore, T. | Apr-02 |
| Document 45 | January 1 - March 31, 2002: Quarterly Report | COMPASS | Apr-02 |
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