

Sudan Health Transformation Project—Phase II Trip Report

Mary Burket

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Communications plan

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Trip Report
Mary Burket
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1. Background: The Sudan Health Transformation Project, second phase (SHTP II) provides support to improve health care service delivery in all 10 states of Southern Sudan. It works in 165 facilities in 14 focus counties and is implemented through 10 sub-contracting partners. SHTP II focuses on improving the capacity of the MOH to manage and implement a basic package of health services in seven high priority areas: child health, nutrition, malaria, family planning, maternal health, water and sanitation and HIV/AIDS.

Until this point, the project had neglected communications. After a slow start, the project has achieved some significant results in the past six months. The project's challenge is now to communicate those results to USAID, the Ministry of Health, and broader audiences to ensure our stakeholders are aware of the project's achievements and momentum.

2. Purpose of Trip: The purpose of this STTA was to create a communication plan for SHTP II and orient a communications intern to the plan, MSH communications tools, and the project.

3. Activities:

Drafting of article for Monday Developments

In preparation for writing the article I spoke on the phone with the COP in advance of my trip, and with representatives of ADRA, WHO, the MOH, and IRC in country. I also visited the Nyakuron Primary Health Care Centre. These meetings also informed the communications plan. The article will appear in the April edition of Monday Developments.

Communications strategy, workplan, and editorial calendar

Per conversation with the Country Lead, the communications plan was written with the assumption that the Communications Intern position will remain filled for at least the remainder of the calendar year. Further plans will need to be made for close-out documentation and an end-of-project conference. Whether or not the intern remains, the project will need to hire additional support for these activities.

The communications plan outlines various activities and suggests some topics to be covered over the course of the year, but the Communications Intern and her in-country supervisor, the Director of Monitoring and Evaluation, should work together and with the rest of the project staff to identify the project's greatest successes and results to communicate.

**Overview and specific training on new CKE Capacity-Building Guide and tools for SHTP II
Communications Focal Point and Communications Intern**

This activity began with Erin's orientation in Cambridge and continued in Juba. Most of the training was focused with Erin rather than Kip, who will remain the project's formal Communications Focal Point, since Erin will do the vast majority of writing and editing for the project.

Meet with staff to discuss their roles in supporting the Communications Focal Point and Communications Intern; discuss identification of success stories and other ways to report results; agree on mechanism to gather and report on activities and results

On Friday I was able to present the communications plan, what we expect from success stories, and how to write a conference abstract to all SHTP II staff as well as representatives from each SCP. As part of the session I asked the SCPs to divide into groups and come up with a success story to tell the group. Each group did well and showed that they had a firm grasp of what we're looking for in terms of success stories. Erin will be following up with each SCP to encourage and support their quarterly submissions of success stories.

I was also pleased to find that one of SHTP II's own staff, David, had written a success story from one of his recent site visits. He shared it with me, and Erin is in the process of editing it and getting necessary approvals before we distribute it widely.

Identify and propose solutions to ensure Communications Intern has proper support both in-country and at the home office

I will have weekly check-ins with Erin Polich, the SHTP II Communications Intern, and monthly calls with her and her in-country supervisor, Kip Eckroad. I will continue to supervise and monitor the editorial quality of the communications products Erin produces.

Meetings attended:

Feb 20: Site visit, Nyakuron Primary Health Care Centre, ADRA office

Feb 21: Meeting with Dr. Abdinasir M. Abubakar, Medical Officer/Epidemiologist

Feb 22: Meeting with Richard Luku, Director of Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation, Ministry of Health

Feb 23: Meeting with Kip Eckroad, Director Monitoring and Evaluation, SHTP II and Erin Polich, Communications Intern, SHTP II

Meeting with Susan Purdin, Alan Paul, IRC

Feb 24: Meeting with Fred Hartman, Country Lead, SHTP II

Feb 25: Presentation on SHTP II communications to sub-contracting partners meeting

Debrief with Fred Hartman, Kip Eckroad, Erin Polich, John Rumunu

4. Follow up Actions to be Taken

In addition to working with and mentoring Erin, I will also continue to work with the SHTP II COP and Country Lead to identify and implement a long-term solution to the project's communications needs. Initially, the communications intern is only scheduled to be in country through May.

List of Annexes: List attachments to the report.

1. Communications Plan
2. Monday Developments Article

Sudan Health Transformation, Phase II (SHTP II)

Communications Plan

February, 2011

Overview

The Sudan Health Transformation Project, second phase (SHTP II) provides support to improve health care service delivery in all 10 states of Southern Sudan. It works in 165 facilities in 14 focus counties and is implemented through 10 sub-contracting partners. SHTP II focuses on improving the capacity of the MOH to manage and implement a basic package of health services in seven high priority areas: child health, nutrition, malaria, family planning, maternal health, water and sanitation and HIV/AIDS.

In all MSH projects, the donor and Ministry of Health are the primary audiences for our communications materials. This is true for SHTP II, but because of the global attention being given to Southern Sudan during the referendum voting and leading to the official birth of the new nation in July, SHTP II has a unique opportunity to disseminate its results and knowledge to a broader audience.

All SHTP II communications must be vetted through an established process to ensure both technical accuracy and editorial quality. The COP and USAID will approve all communications before they are sent to the MSH home office for final editorial review. SHTP II communications will adhere to guidelines set forth in the Branding and Marking Plan submitted to and approved by USAID during the project start-up.

Project Context

SHTP II is in its last year of a three-year contract (though there is a possibility of an extension, it has not yet been granted). The project got off to a slow start, but has recovered in the last year and its results are impressive. The environment the project works in is extraordinarily difficult—there is a dire lack of adequate infrastructure, human resources, and equipment—project results should be analyzed and discussed with that reality in mind.

The goal of SHTP II is to, “build on the decentralization of primary health care services to improve the health status of the Southern Sudanese people.” To do this, SHTP II provides both technical and management training to facility staff, as well as supportive supervision and follow up, provides logistical assistance in the procurement of drugs, distributes long-lasting insecticide treated bed nets to pregnant women and mothers of children under five, has developed and distributed WASH guidelines for each facility supported by the project, and trains peer educators for HIV and AIDS education. The project works with village health committees to strengthen their ability to manage health facilities and the county health system and provides training to home health providers to improve their ability to educate their communities on key health topics.

Communications Objectives

The objective of the SHTP II communication plan is to facilitate strong and effective communications about the project, its purpose, its activities, and its results among USAID, project partners, the Ministry of Health at all levels, MSH, and the general public. This starts with reports to the donor and extends to success stories, visibility in MSH external publications and the press, and to promoting better awareness of best practices in the project's core areas through conference presentations and meetings. Specific communications objectives include to:

- Provide updates on project implementation to the donor, MOH, implementing partners, and MSH home office.
- Promote the activities and impact of the project to USAID, MSH, regional press, and the international public health community.
- Help promote MSH as an effective implementer that is living up to its mission to “save lives and improve the health of the world’s poorest and most vulnerable people by closing the gap between knowledge and action in public health.”
- Create, cultivate, and maintain effective information-sharing with stakeholders, including MSH worldwide, USAID, UNAIDS, UNFPA, USG, Congress, etc. to demonstrate that programs are working.

Challenges and Opportunities

Communications is an oft-neglected part of development projects. When schedules are busy, resources are scarce, and interests lie elsewhere, documentation and dissemination of results is often the first responsibility to be neglected. SHTP II is now fully-staffed for the first time. While that is an opportunity in some respects—some staff may be less stretched than they once were—it may also pose problems if staff feel they need to focus even more intently on picking up the pace of project implementation.

Challenges:

- The project has just one year remaining and until this point has neglected communications. Therefore, there is some catch-up work to be done.
- The project is implemented through 10 sub-contracting partners (SCPs). The main office will need to coordinate with each of these SCPs to gather success stories, data, and results from the field sites.
- Though the country has enjoyed relative stability since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, areas of instability, landmines, and difficult road conditions make traveling to many sites difficult or in some cases, impossible at times.
- The project has no budget for printing.
- The project has recently hired one staff member dedicated to communications, but she is an intern and only currently scheduled to remain on staff through May. There is a possibility of extending her stay, but it is unconfirmed at the time of preparing this draft. The communications plan will, however, be written with the assumption that the communications intern position will remain filled for the life of the project.

Opportunities

Some of the communications challenges this project is facing are also opportunities: the project is fully staffed and has a full-time communications intern. MSH home office support —both from CHS and CKE—is available to provide additional capacity.

SHTP II has a close, collaborative relationship with both USAID and the Ministry of Health. The Director of Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation at the Ministry is keen to improve the ministry's communications and will be supportive of SHTP II in doing so as well. SHTP II has solid relationships with its implementing partners and should be able to expect their cooperation and collaboration in the project's communication activities.

South Sudan is at a turning point in history and has global media attention right now. This presents a great opportunity not just for attention from the media and general public, but from the international health community as well. Upcoming meetings in Washington DC will be an excellent opportunity for the project to show off its successes and expertise through appearance by the acting COP, John Rumunu.

USAID is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year with a large communications campaign aimed at the general public. This presents opportunities for promotion for all USAID projects, but especially for Southern Sudan. USAID has shown that their projects in Southern Sudan are in the spotlight—this can work to our advantage when it comes to communications.

Target Audiences

USAID: as the donor for this project, USAID is a primary audience. SHTP II will strive to communicate the project's results and impact through a variety of mechanisms.

Health Practitioners: Health practitioners, including facility-based and community health workers should be kept informed of the various trainings SHTP II is offering, as well as the results they are contributing to.

Project Partners: The project's 10 sub-contracting partners should be kept up-to-date on project activities so that they can learn from each other and promote best practices within their regions.

Ministry of Health: The National, State, and County-level Ministries of Health should be kept fully informed of SHTP II's activities and results within the areas they oversee.

MSH Staff Worldwide: MSH staff worldwide should know about the SHTP II project, what it is doing, its successes, methods it is using, and lessons it is learning. This is particularly important for relevant MSH Technical Exchange Networks (FP/RH, HIV/AIDS, and MNCH).

The General Public: The SHTP II project has a unique opportunity to raise awareness of MSH and USAID's work among the general public. To capitalize on this opportunity, the CHS Communications manager will work with the SHTP II communications intern and a media consultant hired by CKE to pitch relevant stories to the press. Other vehicles will include

success stories and other content on the USAID and MSH websites, blogs, and electronic newsletters.

Mechanisms

Project Newsletter: A simple project newsletter disseminated to SHTP II SCPs, MSH, the MOH at all levels, and health facility staff, would help keep all actors informed of planned activities, recent successes, and remind them of the overarching goals and breadth of the project.

Reports to USAID: MSH is contractually bound to provide a number of reports to USAID. Quarterly, annual, and periodic reports are, however, not just contractual requirements; they are also opportunities to ensure alignment and collaboration with the donor, help them understand the successes and challenges of the project, and continue to strengthen the project's relationship with USAID.

Success/Results Stories (USAID, MSH): The SHTP II project should produce at least one success story per month. Success stories are important to USAID not only because they are a contractual requirement, but because they are an important way to help demonstrate the impact that the project is having on individuals' lives. They can also be disseminated on a much larger scale through MSH corporate communications, the USAID Washington web site, the Global Health Council Blog, and the USAID Global Impact Blog.

Press Coverage (USAID, MSH, General Public): As stated earlier, there is great opportunity for this project to engage the international media. The CHS Communications Manager will work with a media consultant hired by CKE to garner media attention for SHTP II.

National and International Conferences: The project has not yet presented any of its results at international meetings—this is a missed opportunity. Much like with media coverage, the public health community's current interest in Southern Sudan will make review committees favorable toward accepting SHTP II project abstracts. It is suggested that the staff look for local and regional opportunities and the CHS Communications Manager will keep the team informed when major international conferences announce their call for abstracts.

Regular face-to-face meetings (USAID, MSH, Partners): While technology offers new solutions for distance-based collaboration, there is no replacement for regular face-to-face meetings. Whether in updates to USAID or partner meeting, SHTP II should use these opportunities to its full advantage to promote the project's results and lessons learned.

MSH Intranet/Friday Forward (MSH Staff): The MSH intranet, and the weekly intranet-supported MSH-wide news update, the Friday Forward, are an excellent way to raise the profile of the project and its activities throughout MSH worldwide. Supported by content managers in Cambridge and Arlington, content can quickly be added to the intranet, and new content will be highlighted weekly in the Friday Forward. The intranet houses thousands of pages of information categorized by project, geography, MSH Center/Office, and technical topics, easily searchable and accessible to all MSH staff, but only MSH staff. The intranet is also

a vital link to information related to relevant MSH Technical Exchange Networks (FP/RH, HIV/AIDS, MNCH).

MSH Blog (USAID, Health Practitioners, MoHs, MSH, General Public: The MSH blog should be utilized to disseminate information about the project and the context it is working in through a less formal means than many other communications vehicles. The blog's readership is moderate—about 1,200 unique views per month—but the readers are coming from the US State Department, Congress, USAID, CDC, other major donors, and key partner organizations. Subjects can be tied to MSH corporate monthly topics, but do not have to be.

MSH eNewsletter: The MSH newsletter reaches over 12,000 people each month and that number continues to grow. It is an excellent way to show off project successes and innovations. The topics of eNewsletter content are determined by CKE, but the CHS Communications Manager will advocate for SHTP II involvement whenever appropriate.

MSH Web Site: From time to time it may be possible to post stories from SHTP II on the home page of the MSH Web Site. The SHTP II project page should also be kept up to date.

Hill Briefings/GHC events: The global spotlight on Southern Sudan will provide opportunities for the COP to speak on Capitol Hill and at the Global Health Council annual meeting. The CKE Director of Policy and Advocacy, the CKE Director of Strategic Communications, and the CHS Communications manager will all work with the SHTP II COP to schedule meetings and appearances and draft presentations and speaking notes.

Project Fact Sheet: Because the project will be highlighted at public events in the spring, the SHTP II fact sheet should be updated for dissemination at meetings and events. It can be included in a folder with success stories, or handed out on its own.

SHTP II Communications and Knowledge Exchange Work Plan

Target audience	Activities/tactics	Person(s) responsible	Key messages	Notes on planned outputs/deliverables	Partners	Timeline											
						M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F
Objective 1: Provide updates on project implementation and results to donors, partners, and staff																	
USAID	Quarterly report	COP			Technical advisors, M&E	x				x				x			x
USAID, MOH, Facility staff	Monthly newsletter	Communications Intern (CI)	Upcoming/ongoing/recently completed activities Promote collaboration and learning among partners	Keep MOH, facility staff, and USAID up-to-date on upcoming trainings/activities, key results, and lessons learned	Technical advisors	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
USAID, MOH	End of project report	Consultant?	Project impact, successes, lessons learned	Glossy report to serve as project legacy and use in advocacy and positioning	CHS Communications Manager											x	x
USAID, MOH, Facility staff	In-person meetings	COP, CL, technical advisors	SHTP II is succeeding despite the difficult conditions present in Southern Sudan SHTP II is a unique and important project working in close partnership with the ministry			As needed											
Objective 2: Promote the activities and impact of the project																	
USAID, MOH, MSH, general public	Success stories	CI	Include, but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SHTP II is working hiring from the Diaspora Great success in increasing access to FP counseling Success in increasing HIV activities LDP is creating future leaders of Southern Sudan 	Stories will be used in a variety of ways—submitted to USAID/Washington web site, USAID blog, MSH blog, website, eNewsletter, and Friday Forward	Technical advisors, M&E, COP, CHE CM	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
USAID, MSH, general public	Blog entries	CI	SHTP II is succeeding despite the difficult conditions present in Southern Sudan		CHS CM, CKE	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

			SHTP II is a unique and important project working in close partnership with the ministry																
MSH	Friday Forward	CI, CHS CM	SHTP II is succeeding despite the difficult conditions present in Southern Sudan SHTP II is a unique and important project working in close partnership with the ministry Various lessons learned: technical as well as operational			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
USAID, MOH, MSH, public health community	Fact sheet	CI, CHS CM	SHTP II is succeeding despite the difficult conditions present in Southern Sudan Project impact, successes, lessons learned		COP		x												
MSH, partners, USAID, donors	eNewsletter	CI/CHS CM	Dependant on monthly topic			As requested by CKE/CHS comms manager													
MSH, partners, USAID, donors	Conference abstracts/presentations	Technical advisors	SHTP II is an effective implementer and has had significant impact in project focus areas		M&E, CI, COP													x	x
Objective 4: Create, cultivate, and maintain effective information-sharing with international																			
General Public	Media outreach	CKE media consultant	SHTP II is succeeding despite the difficult conditions present in Southern Sudan		CI, CL, COP,														
Congress	Hill briefings	COP	SHTP II is succeeding despite the difficult conditions present in Southern Sudan	Will be set up by Crystal Lander	CKE, CHS CM			x											
Public Health Community, USAID	GHC events	COP	SHTP II is succeeding despite the difficult conditions present in Southern Sudan	2 events planned—1 concurrent panel and one evening	CKE, CHS CM			x											

SHTP II Editorial Calendar March 2011—MNCH

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4 Template for internal newsletter ready	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18 Newsletter content ready for M&E review	19
20	21	22 Newsletter content ready for COP review	23	24 Newsletter content ready for USAID review	25 Monthly Success Story and communications report submitted to MSH HO (Diaspora)	26

27	28 Monthly Newsletter disseminated	29	30	31		
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Blog entry on MNCH topic—FP success?

April 2011—Health Financing						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11 Fact sheet updated and sent to CHS CM for review	12	13	14	15	16

17	18 Fact sheet finalized	19	20	21	22	23
24	25 Monthly Newsletter disseminated	26	27	28	29 Monthly Success Story and communications report submitted to MSH HO Quarterly report due to USAID	30

Story on Health Financing for Friday Forward
Health financing blog entry

May 2011—HIV/AIDS and TB						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14

15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27 Monthly Success Story and communications report submitted to MSH HO (HIV)	28
29	30 Monthly Newsletter disseminated	31				

Blog on impact of returnees coming from high HIV prevalence areas

June 2011—Health Information						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4

5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13 GHC	14 GHC	15 GHC	16 GHC	17 GHC	18
19	20	21	22	23	24 Monthly Success Story and communications report submitted to MSH HO	25
26	27 Monthly Newsletter disseminated	28	29	30		

July 2011—Leadership and Governance						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25 Monthly Newsletter disseminated	26	27	28	29 Monthly Success Story and communications report submitted to MSH HO (LDP) Quarterly report due to USAID	30

31						
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Blog entry on LDP program

August 2011—Medicines, Vaccines, and Technology

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26 Monthly Success Story and communications report submitted to MSH HO	27

28	29 Monthly Newsletter disseminated	30	31			
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September 2011—Human Resources for Health						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24

25	26 Monthly Newsletter disseminated	27	28	29	30 Monthly Success Story and communications report submitted to MSH HO (HRH)	
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Blog on HRH

October 2011—Malaria and Communicable Diseases						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22

23	24	25	26	27	28 Monthly Success Story and communications report submitted to	29
30	31 Monthly Newsletter disseminated					

Blog on the impact of malaria in Southern Sudan—25% of all cases in facilities

November 2011—Chronic Diseases

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 Begin work on EOP report—outline, consultant, budget, gather data	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19

20	21	22	23 Monthly Success Story and communications report submitted to MSH HO	24	25	26
27	28 Monthly Newsletter disseminated	29	30			

December 2011—Service Delivery and Demand						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24

25	26 Monthly Newsletter disseminated	27	28 Monthly Success Story and communications report submitted to MSH HO	29	30	31
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Blog entry on improving service delivery in severely resource-constrained settings and/or creating demand among the returnee population