



Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
Faculty of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences
Department of Urban and Rural Development
Unit of Environmental Communication and Management of Natural Resources

External Communication at the National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) in Kenya

An Understanding of Communication with Stakeholders

Monica Nderitu

**Faculty of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences
Department of Urban and Rural Development
Uppsala**

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Author: Monica Nderitu

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Supervisor: Lotten Westberg, Unit for Environmental Communication, SLU

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Abstract

This paper has investigated and tried to understand what the staff in National Environmental Authority (NEMA) and the Stakeholders view and think about their relations. It has also tried to investigate the communication strategies that are used by the organisation in dealing with stakeholders as well as the goals and objectives of the communication methods used.

Over and above, the paper also highlights the problems that the organisation and the stakeholders encounter in the way it communicate.

In general the findings show that the relation is mostly in the environmental policies, guidelines and rules enforcement where NEMA is mandated by the Act or Parliament to carry out that duty. The relationship between NEMA and stakeholders is enhanced through communication which is mainly done through letters. It was also clear that the main method used to communicate the policies, is by gazetting the policies and the stakeholders are expected to comply with the rules and guidelines within 14days.

The problems experienced include policy clashing among the government agencies, ministries and parastatals, poor consultation on environmental policy development and formulation whereby NEMA is accused by the stakeholders of not involving them on this. Another problem that is featured is that NEMA-Stakeholders' relationship is felt like 'boss-servant' one.

Some recommendations on how to improve on the problems cited are given. For example NEMA should improve on consultation and try and involve the stakeholders in policy formulation so that they can be able to jointly learn, understand and own those policies. This will make it easier for the stakeholders to implement those policies.

In order to improve on the relationship with stakeholders, and a high likelihood of people accepting to implement the policies and guidelines, NEMA should come up with a communication strategy that would help them to achieve this. For example, Community based social marketing would be a good model as it helps the communicator identify the barriers that inhibit people from engaging in a sustainable behaviour, it also identifies the target group and the goals of communication and above all it gives a chance for piloting the strategy in order to assess its effectiveness. It is imperative that the target group needs are identified in order to come up with a communication strategy that will take those needs into account.

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1. Background

The National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) has been chosen as a case study for this research paper. The Authority was established under the Environmental Management and Coordination Act (EMCA) No. 8 of 1999, under the guiding principle of every Kenyan is entitled to a clean and healthy environment and hence the Authority has the mandate to safeguard and enhance preservation and conservation of the environment. It is also the duty of the Authority to exercise general supervision and coordination over all matters relating to the environment, (EMCA 1999). Moreover, the organisation has been working as the principle instrument of government in the implementation of all policies related to environment. Among many of the Authority's functions is to undertake programmes intended to enhance environmental education and public awareness about the need for sound environmental management as well as for enlisting public support and encouraging the effort made by other entities in environmental issues, (ibid).

The Authority has been mandated to coordinate and supervise environmental matters undertaken by lead agencies and other stakeholders. It also promotes the integration of environmental considerations into development plans in order to enhance sustainable utilization of natural resources (EMCA 1999). The Authority also ensures compliance with and enforcement of regulations, standards and guidelines developed under Environmental Management & Coordination Act (EMCA) 1999-which is the act under which the Authority was established. Moreover, it is also the duty of the Authority to integrate environmental concerns into national development policies, plans and programmes in the country.

The organisation has got a communication policy that emphasises on effective communication with stakeholders. In the spirit of consultation and customer care, the communication strategy sets the guidelines, procedures and considerations that should be done while interacting with the stakeholders. These guidelines are defined by the communication policy of the Authority which is to share the Authority's knowledge and information about all the programmes that are being carried out as well as its views with stakeholders. Another guideline is to enhance trust in the Authority by being transparent in the way it communicates and disseminates information to the stakeholders. The communication policy also seeks to enhance understanding between NEMA and the stakeholders on the role of environmental management matters in the country.

The organisation has a procedure on communication in terms of master forms, letters and memo templates which are termed as "controlled documents". The documents are meant to give standard guideline on how the Authority communicates with the stakeholders. This is in line with the protocols that all government agencies and departments in Kenya have when communicating and interacting with the stakeholders. Another key procedure is that the Authority's spokesperson (the Director General) acts as the image of the Authority and he is the one who signs all the correspondents going out to the stakeholders. In the absence of that, the Corporate Communication Manager can be authorised to speak on behalf of the Authority.

In general the communication policy has the provision of stakeholder's right to know and access information. The organisation interacts with the stakeholders through newsletters,

leaflets, exhibitions and posters which are meant to be clear, novice, and presented in such a way that the stakeholders can easily understand.

1.1 Problem description

Although the term “Communication” has been in existence for so many years, it has been taken for granted since time immemorial. People communicate every time but what does it really mean to have an effective communication whereby people can understand and appreciate one another? Environmental Communication is relatively a new subject and it gives a new perspective to communication in matters related to natural resource management (Cox 2010).

Competent communication is essential in influencing natural resource management policies; scientific knowledge must therefore be communicated effectively (Daniels & Walker 2010). For Environmental experts there is need to assess and adapt to the communication situation in order to achieve effective communication; there is need to understand what the intended audience know and also what they need (Daniel & Walker 2010). Other aspects that count into an effective communication with the audience are patience, good listening skills and being self aware and doing constant self-monitoring. It is also imperative that the environmental experts simplify the complex scientific jargon and technical information into a language that the intended target group will understand and appreciate. Without this, all efforts being made to involve stakeholders in environmental issues and policy communication may be rendered useless as the target group may not act on the information due to lack of comprehension (ibid).

National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) in Kenya being the sole manager and coordinating agency of the government in the country’s environmental issues. Therefore, the Authority has got a key position in communicating environmental information to other stakeholders.

1.2 Research Aim

The research is a case study of NEMA as an organisation and seeks to understand the perspective of some of the staff in the organisation as well as the stakeholders’ in the way communication is done between them and NEMA. In this project work I will be trying to understand the communication process that goes on between NEMA and three stakeholders namely; Kenya Forestry Service (KEFRI), Kenya Industrial Research Institute (KIRDI), and Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA) and also to understand how the actors view the communication they are involved in. I am interested in having an insight on pragmatic and constitutive aspects of environmental communication in a real world and observe which opportunities and challenges that exists in the field of environmental communication and more so in Sub-Saharan-Africa. I would wish to compare the practice and the environmental communication frameworks and theories that have been advanced in the environmental communication subject area. The study will focus on communication around policy and regulations communication by NEMA to stakeholders.

1.3 Research Questions

To achieve the research objective, the following research questions will be discussed in this paper.

1. What do the representatives (the individuals interviewed) of NEMA think about the relations that they have with those they are communicating with?
2. How does NEMA design and conduct their communication with stakeholders and why?
3. What goals does NEMA aim to achieve and why?
4. How do the representatives (the individuals interviewed) of stakeholders perceive the communication?
5. What kind of problems do the actors (both NEMA staff and representatives of Stakeholder organisations) encounter in their communication process and why, and what would they like to improve?

2. Approaches and analysis

To be able to answer the research questions, I have conducted participant observations, semi-structured interviews as well as studied written communication produced by the organisation.

2.1 Participant Observation

The data collection for this study has been done through ethnography type of study whereby I spent time in the organisation and observed, reflected and interpreted what was happening. Ethnography helps a researcher in understanding things from the perspective of those living the life (Spradley 1980). Although I got a chance to experience what was going on internally and externally, I gave focus to external communication so as to understand how policy, guidelines and rules are communicated and implemented.

I was attached at the department of Environmental Education, Awareness and Public Participation and had a supervisor who gave chores to be done and guided well on what events and activities I was to attend for maximum learning. I also had a chance to attend one of the stakeholder workshop organised by NEMA with the Ministry of Planning on education for sustainable development. Internally, I also attended various events for instance a workshop that was assigned the task of coming up with a communication strategy for a development project that is involving various stakeholders, meeting on content development for e-learning project, a meeting with Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology-JKUAT (which is one of the organisation's stakeholder) on Education for sustainable development. In all those events, I was able to observe, understand and appreciate how communication process is carried out.

I constantly observed and took notes of whatever was happening that was related to my study as well as talking face to face with the employees about their own job responsibilities. This helped me to get more insight and personal experience because I used most of my senses in gathering the information on what goes around the organisation in terms of communication. (Parker 1997) Says that "direct observation and participation offers opportunities to catch subtleties and inconspicuous items that might provide a better sense of what is happening"

The duration of the participatory observation started a little late than I expected but all the same I have spent 25 days in the organisation observing. However, since I had to visit the stakeholders and conduct interviews with them, I found myself juggling between NEMA and those stakeholders. This I would term as a difficulty on my part because sometimes I did not spend as much time in the organisation as I would have wanted. Initially, I also had some

difficulties in locating the right people to talk with but as time moved on I was able to interact and got the chance to see what the staff were doing with ease.

I used non-office hours e.g. lunch time to build rapport. Another thing that I did was to be friendly with people especially when they came for the meetings or workshops. After the event, I made sure that I familiarised myself with them and had some talk with them. Through this, I made sure that the actors knew that I was on attachment in NEMA and that I was conducting a research. I would ask the actors questions either directly or indirectly depending on the facial expression that they would give to me. I used my subjective judgement to understand if someone was friendly or not. This helped me because for instance on one occasion, an actor was not very warm initially and I started off by asking him how he felt about the workshop generally. This helped me to break the ice. I went on by asking him how he viewed the way the organisation he worked for viewed the communication they have with NEMA, in this instance he slowly opened up and gave quite a lot of information.

2.2 Semi structured interviews

All the interviews done with NEMA staff and the stakeholders were semi-structured questions. This method was preferred as it helped me to echo, clarify and ask questions out of answers given so as to maximise the opportunity of understanding what the interviewees meant to say, (De Jong 2002).

The interviews were done with four staff at NEMA and representatives of the three stakeholders namely; two representatives from, Kenya Forestry Service (KEFRI), three from Kenya Industrial Research and Development Institute (KIRDI), and one from Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA); first two are government lead agencies and the last one is an advocacy body that represents companies, business lobbyists and the private sector in general. In total 10 interviews were conducted. Each session of the interview lasted for 30-35 minutes, this was dictated by the fact that most of the officers were busy and had series of other things to do and hence I had to be very quick in the interviews. In this case I took notes but also used a voice recorder to capture the conversations.

Bureaucracy was another difficulty that I encountered due to protocols but I overcame it by using the references given by the management on who is best placed to speak with me on the subject area. This helped me because once I visited a person with reference from the administration I was served in a right way. However, the references worked well and when I got them they were willing to share the information with me. I also used friends who work in the organisations to refer me to their colleagues whom I interviewed and this worked very well.

I had prepared the interview questions in advance to make sure that I do not forget any question that I intended to ask during the interview. However as Parker (1997) puts it, I bore in mind that the questions are not set in stone rather they were guidelines during the interview so that I do not stray out of the topic. Therefore, it helped me to control the interview session by asking appropriate questions so as to return the interviewees back to the subject.

To gather data I used the following questions:

2.2.1 Questions for NEMA interviewees

1. *Would you tell me a little about environmental issues you handle?*
2. *What kind of stakeholders do you communicate with?*

3. *What do you communicate with them?*
4. *Would you give a description of your relationship with the stakeholders?*
5. *How would you describe the communication process between you and the stakeholders?*
6. *Do you follow any specific method?*
7. *What is your experience in using the method?*
8. *What would you term as SWOT of your communication?*

2.2.2 Questions for the Stakeholders interviewees

1. *Would you tell me a little about environmental issues you handle?*
 - *Kindly give examples of those environmental issues.*
2. *Do you generally involve NEMA in your environmental issues?*
 - *If yes, what was NEMA's role?*
 - *What kind of support did you get from NEMA?*
 - *What did NEMA contribute with?*
3. *Could you describe the way you are communicating with NEMA?*
4. *Do you follow any specific method when communicating with NEMA?*
5. *How would you rate the communication process between you and NEMA?*
 - a) *What are the Strengths*
 - b) *What are the Weakness*
 - c) *What are the Opportunities*
 - d) *What are the Threats*

SWOT analysis was used to get information but the way of presentation was adapted depending on the interviewee. I asked each interviewee to mention the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that they saw in the communication process around how NEMA communicates the environmental policies, guidelines and rules. SWOT was presented differently for NEMA and stakeholders because I had pre- assumptions that if I asked the stakeholders about SWOT as one word I would not get as much information as I would have wished. The assumptions came from the fact that when I was talking with stakeholders officials from the lead agencies who attended meetings with NEMA, I realised that the word SWOT would be problematic in the sense that it sounded like a jargon to them and thus I decided to present it word for word when asking the questions to stakeholders.

2.3 Literature review

Another method that I used for data collection was through literature review. I used this method first in order to get an overview of what the organisation does and its role in the country. Secondly, it is a good way of getting into depth of some of the communication that the organisation has done practically. Some of the information gathered this way supports the scholarly work that I am doing and hence giving it more credibility, (Booth 2008). I had an opportunity to sit in NEMA's library and study. I read the organisation's past written communication which included newspapers, press releases, press statements, adverts as well as the organisation's overall strategic plan and policies and the Communication Policy and Strategy. On daily basis I ensured that I read through the daily newspapers to see what communication that NEMA has put up for stakeholder's consumption. Most of the communication was on EIA reports whereby the Authority puts up advertisement calling for public and stakeholders comments regarding development projects which have been proposed.

I also read extensively on EMCA 1999, which is the Act of parliament that established the Authority. From this document, I was able to understand the mandate of the Environmental Management Authority and what the stakeholders and all interested people should expect from the Authority.

2.4 Qualitative Analysis

The study report is analysed qualitatively. In line with that I have applied interpretive understanding in order to analyse the data. Above all, the interpretation will be a contingent and partial representation of a complex world of environmental issues. This means that the findings are not measured in numbers rather a social constructivism approach has been applied in data interpretation. Qualitative analysis also “involves a radically different way of thinking about data”, (Strauss & Corbin 1998). Following my research findings, I initially categorised the raw data into various categories for statements that include:

- Relations.
- Communication strategy.
- Goals of communication
- Problems encountered.

By categorising the data this way, it helped me to put an analytic sense by carefully listening to what and how the interviewees were saying in order to give myself a room of taking their perspectives in what they were saying or meant to say (Strauss & Corbin 1998). The interpretation is done with the help of theoretical notions application which I studied during my master programme in Environmental Communication and Management of Natural Resources. In addition to that, I have had a lot of personal reflection while at the stage of data collection and interpretation. I am aware and appreciate the fact that reality about environmental matters does not exist in isolation and it is not out there for people to find it; however, it exists only as an intersubjective awareness among stakeholders. Therefore, the idea of constructivism which I have in mind while analysing the data, is an empirical approach that focuses on the intersubjective ideas that characterise environmental communication.

2.5 Scope and limitations

The aim of the study was to investigate how the communication is carried out between the National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) in Kenya and the stakeholders. Therefore, there was limitation on the number of departments and interviewees. I mostly interacted with people in the department of environmental education awareness and public participation, compliance and the corporate communication.

2.5.1 Trustworthiness

I would like to be transparent as much as possible throughout this project. In the interviews, one shortcoming that I had with one of the stakeholder is that I only got the views of only one interviewee in the organisation although I would have preferred at least two. This means that the information got from the private sector was a perspective from only one representative.

During the data collection I also spoke with the stakeholders informally and tried to ask them questions regarding how they viewed their communication and relationship with NEMA.

That way I was able to gain insight on what to expect when I got to the real interview day. It also helped me to be able to restructure the interview questions for the representatives in such a way that I could maximise the chances of getting as much information as possible from the interviewees. The data gathered for the report is a subjective view of the people who I got interview; this means that they shared their own perspective of how communication is carried out.

In data interpretation, I am aware of my pre-understanding of what environmental communication entails and hence it may influence the way I make sense of the information collected and hence the presentation. The interpretation may also be influenced by my background in sociology as some theories such as social constructivism may be considered while trying to understand and interpret the reality. However, I reflected a lot during the internship period and while interpreting the data. This is very important as it helped me to critically think before drawing conclusions on the information. Initially I had tried a pre-planned way of categorising the data but when I thought about it critically, I let the data that I collected talk to me and I listened keenly, I got to relax and I became more flexible on data categorisation and hence I finally came up with the categories relating them to the research questions (Strauss & Corbin 1998).

3. Theoretical concepts

From what I have learned during the Masters Programme in Environmental Communication and Management of Natural Resources, I have developed ideas about what an efficient communication strategy should generally include. Therefore, there are certain aspects of communication that a communicator should have in mind. In this chapter, I described some concepts of communication that I think are important for successful communication in trying to make people interested, listen and change their mind and behaviour in a sustainable way.

A communication strategy can be described as goals and methods used to channel the information to the expected target group with an aim of changing their environmental behaviours to be long lasting. This means that the strategy has to take into account the deliberate action of knowledge building within the target group. Since environmental communication deals with people who should actively and willingly take part in the building of the society; it is important to bear in mind or learn how to look at situations from the target group's perspective and try to see situations through their lenses; the relevance of the communication to the target group should be understood by the communicator (Nitsch 2000). According to McKenzie-Mohr 2006-2009 a strategy starts by developing a goal, identifying barriers that inhibit people from engaging in sustainable behaviour, and once the goal is defined and target group is identified there is need to understand the needs, values and perspectives of the receiver to be able to decide how to develop what methods to use. This means that one has to think of what messages and medium to use in order to effectively pass the information. It is also important to evaluate the communication strategy so as to monitor its effectiveness.

3.1 Symbolic interactionism

This is an analytical theory that puts emphasis on the nature of interaction among people (Charon 2007, p.23). Human beings are always acting in relation with one another, perceive, interpret and give meanings to situations. Symbolic interactionism also gives focus on perspectives which helps us to constitute and give meaning to our world and is a very crucial aspect of communication. (Charon 2007) has the following arguments advanced about perspectives;

- *That each individual has got various perspectives. This is because we belong to various social groups and social status which affect our perception and interpretation of situations at a particular given instance*
- *Perspectives are not predispositional merits determining response but are guides to understanding a situation. Actors apply perspectives in order to make sense out of situations.*
- *Perspectives are dynamic; this means that they change depending on situations. As people interact, they are bound to change, alter, reject some perspectives or even shift completely.*

At the centre of interest in environmental issues are public officials in government ministries, parastatals and agencies who have the duty to formulate, shape or even implement environmental acts, laws as well as international agreements (Cox 2010,p.35).Therefore, in understanding communication at NEMA as a government coordinator of environmental issues in Kenya, I will take into consideration symbolic interactionism in order to bear in mind how symbols like language shapes people's perspectives. The authority has a rhetorical perspective in its work. This means that it makes purposeful and consequential efforts to influence the society into behaving sustainably. In the formulation of policies and regulations, the organisation is therefore constantly influencing the stakeholder's perception and meaning of what environment entails.

3.2 Community based social marketing (CBSM)

In order to instil sustainable behaviour change, organisations should consider putting efforts on discovering barriers that inhibit people from behaving sustainably (McKenzie-Mohr 2006-2009). CBSM is one such approach that can be used to help policy makers come up with ways that can increase chances of the intended implementers to take up the policies, internalise them and work with them. The traditional way of thinking that by using media to create public awareness and increasing knowledge helps in changing people's behaviours does not work as people may be informed about an environmental issue but they still behave unsustainably. Behaviour change within people requires more than just information and knowledge (Westberg 2009). NEMA as the leading agency in environmental matters has a key role in ensuring that all the stakeholders understand, appreciate and do the actual implementation of policies and guidelines. CBSM hence acts as an alternative way of ensuring sustainable behaviour change as it deals with individual contact and identifying both internal and external barriers that would prevent an individual from engaging in a sustainable behaviour as well as seeking commitment that they will try the new ways or implement the policies. The CBSM strategy has practical approach that includes identification of barriers that hamper sustainable behaviour, designing a strategy which includes use of tools, piloting the strategy by use of focus groups which is very important in measuring the effectiveness of a strategy and the evaluation of the program impact once it has been kicked off with all the stakeholders (McKenzie-Mohr 2006-2009)

3.3 Symbolic legitimacy

Another important theoretical notion is symbolic legitimacy. According to (Cox 2010, p.64), “legitimacy is the right to exercise power and the sense of communication is to help establish or challenge the legitimacy of action affecting the environment” NEMA as a government authority must therefore rise to its task and exercise the legitimacy conferred upon it to actively involve stakeholders who should be willing to listen to the authority and implement the policies and regulations in protecting the environment. For the organisation to succeed in influencing the policy implementers, there must be competent communication that involve critical analysis of the stakeholders and hence to enable the authority to be able to use the right strategy in communicating the policies and regulations to them. This is should therefore be seen overly as a key factor in communication for sustainable development.

3.4 Participation and collaboration

Participation refers to the ability of stakeholders to influence environmental decisions through access to relevant information, getting involved in policy formulation. This is very important in building trust among the stakeholders and having them own the development in question. In true participation, all the ideas and decisions of the stakeholders are taken into consideration. There is mutual respect and people are free to air their views without fear of intimidation or persecution. In order to succeed in environmental issues such as climate change, all stakeholders should be involved and therefore the world governments through their environmental agencies needs to encourage everyone to participate in issues relating to sustainable environmental behaviours. Participation gives room for joint learning and sharing of information and ideas that would foster progress.

In realising that in most natural resource and environmental issues there is no single body or environmental management agency that can adequately address the various issues that are concerned single handed, collaboration hence becomes of paramount importance. This is because it brings in a new perspective as other stakeholders may contribute with valuable ways of improving the situation or policies, Daniel & Walker (2010). It is very important for environmental agencies to appreciate the role of a good relationship with stakeholders for the betterment of system management as the work of taking care of environment depends on everyone. The interdependence of government agencies and stakeholders which is emphasised in collaboration helps in completing the system in a working manner.

In policy and regulations formulation, it is of great importance that the stakeholders are involved so that they can be able to contribute to decision making on the best practices and more so to own the process. When this happens, the stakeholders are most likely to implement the policies as they jointly formulated them with the government agencies and hence feel responsible for the future direction of the course. In the end, instillation of behaviour change becomes simpler than when people are not involved in policy making, Daniel & Walker (2010).

3.5 The art of Environmental Communication

Nitsch (2000) says that “the most important consideration in environmental communication is the message content and meaning of those words and symbols”. This means that the information that is exposed to people about the environment influences their interpretation of the situations and in that sense contributes a lot in what people see as important or less important to them. This may in turn shape people’s behaviour towards the environment.

For an organisation like NEMA, it is important to bear in mind that people react differently to any situation or information exposed to them. Therefore, it is imperative that they understand how stakeholders react to information. It is good to bear in mind such as how stakeholders perceive the environmental problems, how committed are they to environmental issues as well as human imperfection. When the organisations have this understanding, it means that when designing the message to send to the target groups, more focus will be given to relevance of the information and hence increase receptiveness and ultimately its acceptance.

3.6 Environmental Communication by Cox. R.

Cox has defined environmental communication as “pragmatic and constitutive for our understanding of environment as well as our relationship to the natural world; it is the symbolic medium that we use in constructing environmental problems and negotiating society’s difference to them”

As instrumental/pragmatic environmental communication helps in practically enlightening, persuading or even giving warnings about environmental issues to people with an aim of helping them to get solutions. This pragmatic part of environmental communication can be used in educating the stakeholders.

The constitutive part of the environmental communication helps us to create symbols or depiction of nature and environmental problems themselves as subject for our understanding (Cox 2006, p.12). This means that it shapes our discernment of situations. The symbolic aspect of environmental communication helps us to understand our environment and we hence label it as useful or as an object of exploitation.

NEMA as the body entitled with the work of monitoring environmental matters in Kenya, this definition of environmental communication applies. The agency should be more aware of how communication works in this way and take advantage of it by being more consciously trying to shape people’s meaning of environment.

4. Results and Discussions

In this section am going to discuss the findings of my research project in terms of the relations that NEMA’s representatives views to have with the stakeholders, stakeholders view of their relation with NEMA, the communication strategy used, goals of communication and problems highlighted by the interviewees.

4.1 Relations

From the data collected through interviews and personal observations that I made, it emerged that there is a relationship between NEMA and the lead agencies and the stakeholders. This is mainly in the environmental policies, guidelines and rules enforcement whereby NEMA is mandated by the government to ensure that the environment is respected and well utilised by all stakeholders (EMCA 1999). This relationship is enhanced through communication which is mostly done through letters and directives.

The information gathered from the two lead agencies that I interviewed showed that there is a relationship between NEMA and the agencies. One of the areas that were cited in the relation with the Authority is the involvement in matters related to environmental regulations and compliance. Specific activity that was mentioned is the issuing of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIAs) certification that NEMA does for all the projects that the agencies deals with. It was made clear that the agencies have to communicate with NEMA in that regard as it is responsible for EIA regulations and guidelines; the agencies have to report to NEMA.

The interviewees said that NEMA also relates with them by giving support in terms of offering training to the agencies on EIAs. The interviewees said that NEMA also initiates communication with lead agencies on matters related to environmental research that NEMA may need and they are sometimes involved in formulating standards with NEMA. In this case the relationship is symbiotic as there are some occasions that NEMA requires the specialists help from stakeholders who are involved with research for them to help in investigations. One example that was given was the investigation on Lake Naivasha where the living organisms were dying and the researchers from the stakeholders were called upon to collaborate with NEMA in the investigation.

The environmental issues that the private sector handles have got policy aspects for instance intervention, direction towards environment vs. compliance. This means how rules and regulations and awareness are done between NEMA and them. The interviewee who represented the organisation expressed the relationship with NEMA as *“more of impeditive than facilitative”*. This was clarified to mean the private sector feels that the way NEMA relates with them is more punitive because the EIA process was very slow and sometimes unfairly administered. From the interview, the problem on how the EIA process is facilitated was of concern the interviewee said that, *“sometimes it's done when not required”*. Over and above the interviewee said that the relationship with NEMA is such that it gives institutional support to the organisation especially on Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and termed it as NEMA's legal mandate to do that and hence should be fair and impartial.

4.2 Communication strategies

The information presented here is based on interviews conducted with some staff in the organisation, baseline information gathered through literature review and past communication, and also from the personal observations while I was attached in the organisation. I am going to discuss what both the NEMA staff and the Stakeholders representatives said so as to give a clear glimpse of what each side thinks and views the

communication strategy used. NEMA has the responsibility of supervising and coordinating environmental matters undertaken by lead agencies and other stakeholders.

It also ensures compliance with and enforcement of regulations, standards and environmental guidelines developed under the Environmental Management & Coordination Act (EMCA) of 1999 among other responsibilities. Given that, the organisation has developed (on record) a Communication Policy and Strategy for 2009-2011 which is meant to:

- *Endorse communication, consultation and customer care as a priority*
- *Provide communication guidelines*
- *Show and spearhead commitment to effective communication and consultation both internally and externally*
- *Provide framework for effective communication and consultation that underpins the delivery of high quality services.*

The strategy emphasises on building a positive reputation and corporate image. It portrays the organisation as one that is keen in being seen as an efficient operator, modern regulator of environmental issues, influential advisor, effective communicator and also as a champion for the environment. The communication strategy defines guidelines that could increase the authority's engagement with stakeholders. There is emphasis on communication channels being target group-focused. One of the interviewee put it that *"the information communicated should be clear and easily understood and most importantly communication activity that the authority engages in must involve stakeholders who have interest or stake in whatever project or activity that the authority is undertaking"*.

The aim of the external communication strategy (which includes public information and consultation) is meant to inform the regulated community and other stakeholders about compliance obligations. The information is mainly disseminated through publications both electronically and in print to keep stakeholders informed about what NEMA does and how to access their services.

The communication strategy is to be measured, monitored and evaluated through regular surveys while the website will be monitored to assess the number of visitors to the site and to increase satisfaction levels. The organisation also intends to measure the success of the communication strategy by directly assessing if the stakeholders have made positive changes in their environmental practice and policy implementation.

Although there is a communication strategy in records, it appeared that the perception of most of the interviewees in NEMA was that communication is done in a "local manner" Two of the interviewees used the term 'local manner' which is a common term used by most Kenyans to mean something done but not up to standards. In this case, it means that there are no environmental communication notions /tenets being applied while communication is carried out in the Authority.

From the interviews that I conducted with NEMA staff, it emerged that there is a standard way of communicating with the stakeholders. The interviewees in the Authority said that there is a procedure and template on how letters to the stakeholders should be written and they know it from the heart. This is also something that I observed when I was attached in the organisation. All letters outlining the communication that NEMA intends to pass on to the stakeholders (the Permanent Secretary in the case of a ministry and to the Director General in the case of other parastatals) should be signed by the Director General (DG). All the interviewees termed the process as a bureaucratic process that sometimes consumes a lot of time before communication is done.

Another way in which the authority communicates with the stakeholders is through stakeholder meetings. The interviewees said that the meetings are meant to enhance mutual understanding among the participants. They are also used as a way of making decisions. However, the interviewees had sentiments that the meetings are mostly top down and in a number of instances the resolutions taken are not implemented. From personal observation and perspective, in one of the meeting that I attended with stakeholders, there seemed to be a 'stair' that is separating NEMA with the stakeholders. This means that the stakeholders had what seemed to me like 'NEMA knows it all' sense and therefore there was no free and deliberate effort to very actively engage themselves in coming up with ideas that would help to forge the process forward. From my perspective, in a democratic process, the stakeholders should be able to openly express themselves and discuss the issues; they should also have equal access to the required resources and opportunities to participate in the consensus building (Cox 2006). When stakeholders are given an opportunity to be listened to and to speak in an un-interruptive way, it increases their chances of gaining confidence and trusting the process hence improving the relationship and ultimately giving progress to the process (ibid).

The interviewees also said that the authority communicates with the stakeholders through emails and also through the website. They said that the NEMA website is where the organisation puts all the information and keeps updating on current news, ongoing projects and new projects with the expectation that the stakeholders will read it. From my participation on the organisation's website review, I realised that some of the information is not up to date and some of the terminologies used could be a bit hard for the stakeholders. However, I gave a report on what in my view I saw was necessary for adjustment. (See appendix)

From the literature review, I discovered that there is a public information and Consultation strategy that is recorded as one of the ways through which the organisation uses to relate and inform the stakeholders about their compliance obligations. The strategic aim is *"to make available a range of timely, relevant, accurate published information, both electronically and in print to keep customers informed"*.

The Lead agencies interviewees categorically said that the communication is mainly done by letters; the process of letter writing was also from the heart and was easily described by the interviewees- The DG sends letters to DG NEMA and vice versa. The information is then passed on to the relevant department for action.

When communication comes from NEMA, the DG in the lead agency forwards communication to the Head of Departments (HODs) specific officer. Such information is mainly on compliance and policy issues e.g. the wetland regulation of 2009, noise and excessive vibration pollution control regulation and communication on matters relating to permit licensing for projects to be carried out.

Another strategy that the Lead agencies uses to communicate with NEMA is through consultation meetings which are organised by them or NEMA on programmes or environmental activities to be carried out for instance communication on education for sustainable development. As lead agencies, they also communicate on issues about consultation on policy formulation on certain issues e.g. application for access to genetic resources and benefit sharing. The interviewees said that the consultation meetings are also used by NEMA to communicate with lead agencies on issues regarding deliberative meetings,

awareness workshops, approval of funded developments e.g. Global Environmental Facility (GEF), accreditation, conferences on conventions, retreats and EIAs.

The main communication strategy advanced by Private Sector representative during the interview was letters which the interviewee termed as “*straight forward through bureaucracy*”. Communication strategy used while communicating with NEMA was termed as “standard” where everything is in the power of writing. Letters are written and the Chief Executive Officer ((CEO) has to sign and then they are delivered to NEMA. Another method of communication used is emails which were termed as only effective when NEMA is defending itself. This was clarified to mean that the only time the Authority responds quickly is when the complaints are made public on media. However, the private sectors expressed interest in having NEMA coming to them themselves and sit with them and discuss and they should not send consultants on their behalf.

4.3 Goals and content of the Communication

From the interviews and the literature review on the Communication Policy and Strategy, the organisation has objectives that it intends to meet when communicating with the stakeholders. A number of these goals were highlighted as follows:

- *To enhance mutual understanding among the stakeholders*
- *To inform the stakeholders on the actions that NEMA is taking to protect the environment and their role in preserving the environment.*
- *To keep stakeholders informed all through so as to make them feel confident and reassured that NEMA is working in a transparent way*
- *To involve stakeholders in constructive consultation and work on how to improve the quality of the environment.*

In order to achieve these goals, the organisation has come up with key messages that are meant to be intertwined in all communication that goes out of NEMA to the stakeholders. The goal of the communication is to demonstrate that NEMA is achieving its mandate, show the long-term approach to tackling environmental issues by linking environmental interventions to sustainable development and the achievement of Vision 2030; as well as ensuring that people continue to be captivated and engaged. The key messages are to reflect NEMA as a government Authority that is mandated by the government to regulate, supervise and coordinate all environmental issues in the country. They are also meant to inform people that environmental regulation is not meant to hurt the economic development but to promote sustainable growth. Another key message that the organisation send to stakeholders is that environmental protection is a collective responsibility of the government and the stakeholders and hence everyone should feel responsible of preserving and conserving the environment.

4.4 Problems encountered

On the relations, the interviewees in NEMA said that there seems to be a problem on the implementation of policies and regulations because of conflict in mandate with lead agencies. This is because these lead agencies are also government organisations that are set to deliver services on behalf of the government. Therefore there arises a problem with power relations as both parties feel that they are mandated to take care of the environment and hence it becomes very hard for NEMA to direct them on what is good for environment.

The other problem that hurts NEMA – stakeholders’ relationship especially the Lead agencies according to the interviewees is overlapping of policies. This is mainly owing to the fact that NEMA was established through an act of parliament and before its formation, environmental issues were being handled by other lead agencies especially the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources. Therefore, even after its establishment, most of the policies in other agencies were not adjusted and hence the clashing of interest.

The interviewees in NEMA also said that novelty of the organisation also is a problem that hampers relations with stakeholders and hence culminates in hurting the communication and implementation of policies and enforcement of regulations with the stakeholders. This means that since NEMA is relatively a new government agency, the other lead agencies that have been in existence have the “*big brother*” attitude and hence do not take what the organisation passes to them seriously. NEMA interviewees also sighted lack of capacity in terms of human resource and finances as one of the problem affecting communication and implementation of policies and regulations.

Another prominent issue that featured out of the study is the problem of lack of sharing of work plans amongst the lead agencies. In environmental matters, all stakeholders should work together in order maintain the wholesomeness of the system (Daniel & Walker 2010). There is no single agency that can handle all environmental issues independent of the others, therefore, when the lead agencies fail to share their work plan, there is confusion and sometimes duplication of effort which gives a perception of competition than collaboration. When stakeholders compete other than work together towards mutual understanding and joint learning, there is a disadvantage because competition only helps them to flex their muscles and show who is mightier at the expense of joint progress. This means that eventually the course is never completed and at times some people working in a competitive atmosphere do not feel like they own the project (Daniel & Walker 2010). From my perspective, the communication strategy that the organisation uses does not include all the stakeholders in the most crucial point of consultation which is at the policy formulation stage.

The private sector interviewee said that NEMA reacts more than being active. This means that relationship between NEMA and the private sector “*is more of boss-servant one*”. The sector does not think that NEMA is interested in involving them in a more cooperative way. There was a complaint that the private sectors has been trying to reach NEMA but in vain; the interviewee said that “*NEMA is not interested in dialogue with the private sector*” This was clarified to mean that severally private sector has sort audience with NEMA but the authority does not respond and it makes the private sector feel frustrated and disrespected.

The stakeholders representatives, felt that there is not much communication going on between NEMA and the institutes. They expressed interest that they would like NEMA to involve them more and communicate with them more often and clearly on environmental matters. They said that they are willing to listen and participate even in policy development.

Another factor that was prominent from the stakeholder’s perspective is that NEMA is not independent of political interference there is ‘*big man syndrome*’. This means that the activities carried out by NEMA are highly influenced by political figures and hence not fair and impartial. They said that the allocation of permits for research and development are at times done in an unfair manner. A case of Maasai Mara National park and the licensing of the economic developments in the park was one area that the interviewees highly gave as an example.

Currently the stakeholders feel that NEMA has not made a proactive job to involve them in policy formulation and joint learning and understanding of environmental issues, guidelines and rules that govern how the environment should be handled.

The stakeholders said that the communication process between them and NEMA was one sided as there is a big question mark on how soon NEMA responds to any information emanating from the stakeholders yet the agency expects the stakeholders to act very fast on the directives that it gives- the process was termed as frustrating for the private sector.

SWOT Analysis

SWOT analysis was done by the interviewee on the relations and communication process. The way I presented SWOT analysis as a method was based on my personal judgement on whether I think the interviewee will understand the term "SWOT" and therefore accordingly I would either ask directly what is the SWOT of the communication strategy they use or break it down and ask for instance "what is the strength, weakness, opportunities and threats of your communication strategy each at a time.

Strengths

- NEMA has legal mandate- the interviewee from NEMA felt that the organisation is in a better position to enhance environmental policies, guidelines and regulations as it has the backing of the law.
- They have capacity in terms of finance and human resource. The stakeholders felt that NEMA has strength in the fact that the government has mandated and funds it to carry out environmental management and hence can be in a good position to involve them in the environmental management

Weaknesses

- Enforcement of rules and regulations is selective and poor .The stakeholders felt that NEMA's relationship with them was weak as they did not trust the way the authority enforces the environmental rules.
- The stakeholders also felt that NEMA is poor in consultation. The private representatives categorically said that there is no dialogue between them and NEMA.
- NEMA has not said anything about communication of the regulations; they have not done much to make the stakeholders fully aware of their environmental policies and regulations. There was a general concern that people do not understand the rules and therefore this makes it hard for them to comply.
- NEMA has not sensitised the stakeholders about environment and the rules and guidelines that govern it and more also on how to take care of the environment. For instance the private sector interviewee felt that the way communication is done by NEMA to the private sector is punitive because NEMA just gazettes the policies and rules for people to follow. The interviewee said that the private sector is not involved in policy formulation; "NEMA just publishes the rules and gives 14 days' ultimatum for compliance".

- NEMA is not felt on the ground because they are not interactive. This means that the stakeholders in general feel that NEMA just sits in the office in the city removed from the grassroots to lobby for sustainable environmental practices.

Opportunities

- Both NEMA and stakeholders representatives felt that there is much more environment work to do hence an opportunity to improve on their relationship with each other for the betterment of the environment.
- The stakeholders are willing to consult with NEMA to improve on joint learning of the environmental policies, guidelines and regulations that govern the environment.
- The stakeholders would be open to being involved in environmental policy development. The interviewees said that they would be very much interested in working together with NEMA in environmental policy formulation so that they would be well aware of what they should do in order to have a sustainable environment for the benefit of present and future generations.

Threats

- Political interference. The stakeholders felt that NEMA's environmental decisions are highly influenced by the political atmosphere in the country and hence it affects the way they relate with the stakeholders.
- Selective application of rules and regulations. The private sector felt that NEMA is not fair in the way it enforces the regulations because they felt that they do not involve them in policy formulation.
- Representation to the board should be reviewed; currently it's an '*academic board*'. This was the view of the private sector representative. The interviewee felt there is need to diversify NEMA board to include multidisciplinary and more divergent people to give different views of environmental management.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

From the interviews conducted and the participatory observation while I was attached at NEMA, I interpreted that the term 'communication' is used in the organisation to mean the relationship with media and on a more 'advanced level' it was meant to mean writing letters, emails and using website to pass information to the audience.

Environmental communication is a new field that many had not heard of before. Therefore, whatever communication that was done in the organisation was not seen from an environmental communication perspective.

Borrowing from (McKenzie-Mohr 2006-2009) environmental perspective, one way of enhancing sustainable behaviour among the stakeholders would be by coming up with a goal of the communication, identifying the barriers that inhibit them from engaging in sustainable behaviour, designing a strategy and tools to use in order to communicate with people in such a way that they will likely accept the new behaviour.

When the interviewees for instance termed communication in the organisation as not scientific and 'very local', yet the organisation holds stakeholder workshops, meetings and training to build capacity, I interpreted that as lack of awareness on what environmental communication entails. This is because from my perspective and understanding of environmental communication as both pragmatic and constitutive, what the organisation does in those workshops is part of environmental communication. According to Cox (2010), "pragmatic aspect of environmental communication does educate, alert, persuade, mobilises and helps us to solve environmental issues". However, from my view, even though the Authority does not term it explicitly as environmental communication, the pragmatic aspect of environmental communication is the most emphasised in NEMA while communicating. Since it is the most instrumental sense of communication, it seems to be used more for problem solving and for educating/training campaigns for the stakeholders' (Cox 2010).

For the constitutive aspect of environmental communication which helps in shaping perceptions about the environment which goes hand in hand with people's understanding and appreciation of the nature as place that they should take care of for sustainability (Cox 2010, p .20), it seems that the organisation as a lead coordinator of environmental issues in the country has not achieved much on that. Therefore, NEMA should try to contribute to the development of an understanding of any images, pictures of the environment as something that should be treated with care and hence should be utilised sustainably.

The perception that I got from the stakeholders that were interviewed is that they do not have much understanding of what they should do to implement policies that are meant to guide them on nature conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. This means that NEMA as an organisation has not stepped up to really involve the stakeholders in joint learning and understanding of what the policies, guidelines and rules mean and why it is important to implement them.

Another aspect is participation and collaboration, the information gathered indicated that as much as NEMA feels that it involves all the stakeholders in matters related to natural resource management, there is a general feeling from the stakeholders interviewed that they are not involved in the policy formulation. In true participation, all stakeholders are involved right from policy formulation, and in decision making (Cox 2010).When this happens, the implementation of policies becomes easier because the stakeholders will take responsibility of their own work and would want to move it forward for sustainability.

In matters related to environment and management of natural resources, stakeholders' involvement in policy formulation, planning and management is important because it can help in coming up with realistic and effective environmental policies, guidelines and rules and in the end improve implementation. A good stakeholder approach would include 'cooperative involvement' where the stakeholders act as partners with Governments' Environmental Managers in decision making process. This is what in my view; I would call the most 'natural level of involvement' because when stakeholders are involved in developing policies, they are highly likely to own and take responsibility of those policies hence making them implement the policies with ease.

NEMA has the symbolic legitimacy because it is mandated by the government to oversee all matters related to the environment (EMCA 1999).The organisation has been using this mandate to set environmental guidelines and rules that the stakeholders should follow. While the process of determining the guidelines and rules to be adhered to by stakeholders' is very technical, it is not purely neutral and without political interference (Cox 2010).

From the findings, my interpretation is that the stakeholders especially the private sector feel that NEMA does not work free of political influence.

5.2 Recommendations

After getting views from NEMA and the stakeholders, I have come up with some suggestions that in my view would help the Authority to improve on the problems cited by the interviewees so as to become better environmental managers. To improve on relations, there is a need for improving communication where by the stakeholders should be more involved. This would be done by adjusting consultation policies in order to give room for stakeholders' participation in policy formulation and decision making on matters related to environment (Cox 2010). This will enhance implementation of the policies that NEMA comes up with because the stakeholders will be more responsible for something they have helped to develop than something that is imposed on them. NEMA should make a point of finding out more about the projects going on and advise the stakeholders respectively.

NEMA and stakeholders especially the lead agencies should come up with way of sharing their work plan so that no single policy is duplicated. This will ensure coherence and collaboration in all environmental matters. This may call for the whole government to re-evaluate the policies and mandate that it has given various ministries, departments and parastatals so that there can be harmony in the way these agencies work and interact with each other. A more organised structure would make it easier for stakeholders to relate and improve policy implementation for the benefit of the environment (Daniel &Walker 2010).

There is need for NEMA to do more than just awareness and education so that stakeholders can understand their work and the importance of environmental protection. Unless people understand and see the advantage associated with conserving nature in order to change perceptions and attitudes, all the activities carried out every day however big they may look will be all in vain, (McKenzie-Mohr 2006-2009).

NEMA should also try to link policies with some existing values and norms in the society-people's values tend to influence their behaviour (Cox 2010, p.249). For example if NEMA wants to uphold and communicate to the stakeholders that environmental regulation is desirable and not a threat to economic development, there is need for the organisation to come up with strategy that demonstrates to people how environmental conservation can be beneficial. Naturally, most people will take up something if it has an immediate advantage and therefore, there is much need to try link nature conservation with beneficial aspects.

In order to change people's behaviour and attitudes, a lot more is needed other than just informing and educating them. The environmental managers should have in mind that people have different perspectives and rationales while engaging themselves with the environment. One of the ways in which an organisation like NEMA would succeed in changing stakeholders' behaviour and attitudes towards environment would be by identifying the internal and external barriers that inhibit them from taking up the policies and guidelines for effective implementation (McKenzie-Mohr 2006-2009). It is also imperative for the organisation to try as much as possible to constantly and consciously take the perspective of the stakeholders whenever they want to communicate with them. The organisation should first understand what are the needs, attitudes and behaviour of the target group before deciding on what communication strategy to come up with. This will help the organisation to come up with strategies, messages and information that is more likely to be accepted by the target group (Nitsch 2000).

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Appendix

27/04/2010

NEMA's WEBSITE REVIEW REPORT.

Dear Sir,

Kindly find the information below on what I think and feel about NEMA's website. I have tried to summarize it as much as I can.

General

The website as a tool of communication I think it is really good. There is a lot of information and it is easy to understand about the role of the institution as well as find the contact numbers and email.

- I really liked the green line idea

Project information

Checking the projects it is still good but a little bit summarized. But in general I feel that it's a lot better even than many other governmental agencies WebPages that I know in terms of good in information, just need a little more information on the projects.

Things to improve on

- **Availability on popular browsers/sites**-The web is missing the new ways of communication maybe, facebook page, or twitter -The NEMA blog has no information seems it's not so interactive
- **No tell-a-friend provision,**
- The email contact does not work, I tried that before and it bounces back.
- There is some text missing on some of the captions inserted on some pages e.g. on about NEMA strategic plan.
- Some pages e.g.-The page on services is not well outlined; there is a blank space way before scrolling down to see the information.
- The page on publications communicates nothing to me-needs some modification/improvement.
- There is no much information on EIA study reports. And also some information activities like public hearings are too much outdated.
- Some pages do not have flowing information when you click next, I expect to get more of what I was reading before but I get to totally different information.
- The page on EEIPP has some spelling errors -'she provision' guess was supposed to be 'the provision'. Please note that in some instances nouns prefix are spelt with small letters e.g. Kenya.
- Most IMPORTANTLY, the website misses pictorial communication-sometimes pictures speak louder than writing please check on that. The written communication is a bit overwhelming to my eyes as a reader.
- The website misses translation to other languages especially to **Swahili** which is an important language in the region.

- There is no information on how to register as an environmental expert.

I feel that there is still room for simplifying the language that is used as some people may not have the technical terms used in environmental field, it may appear easy for me because I am familiar with the field but if the website is supposed to communicate to all the citizens in Kenya and beyond our borders, then more needs to be done on simplifying technical communication.

Kindly do not hesitate to contact me for any clarification.

Compiled by

Monica Nderitu

keshin2002@yahoo.com

mond0001@stud.slu.se

Phone: 0721-613 408