Rising public awareness
Promises beyond the dreams

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What is raising public awareness?

It is dissemination of needed information to societies in order to help developing the community knowledge and enthusiasm required in building the sustainability.

What is the main idea?

Implementing the role and attitudes of civil society and related bodies.

What are its key concepts?

- Importance of public involvement.
- Role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).
- The integration between the working bodies.
The profile of the two projects
The first project:

- **Title**: Improvement of some rangelands in the North Western Coast of Egypt.
- **Implementation Area**: Matrouh Governorate.
- **Zone**: Costal Zone of Egypt.
- **Project main target**: Rehabilitating of some rangelands with some palatable domestic natural pasture plants.
Problem:

Bedouin tribes are using the fodder shrubs as being a biomass plants, destroying the land cover so exposing the area to the desertification consequences, and exposing women to the bad consequences of unsafe cooking.
Cont., The first project:

- **Proposed solution:** Biogas fermenters were disseminated in the project area to protect the new cultivated shrubs from using as biomass feedstock and to prevent women from hazardous of unsafe cooking.
The second project:

- **Title:** Dissemination of thermal gas plants in the Nile Delta.
- **Implementation Area:** Dakahlia Governorate.
- **Zone:** Nile Delta of Egypt.
- **Implementation Date:** 2005 – upright now.
- **Project main target:** LPG crisis solution with prevention of burning rice straw and the agricultural wastes in the open air.
Problem: Farmers are burning the rice straw and the agricultural wastes in the open air emitting thousands megatons of CO₂ into the atmosphere magnifying the bad consequences of climate change and producing serious health hazards to the local community.
Proposed solution:
Gasification units of Rice straw and agricultural wastes were disseminated in the area.
How to design a public awareness strategy?

In order to achieve that target certain stages should be followed:
I- The prefeasibility stage;

At this stage, the community must be studied carefully in order to identify its characteristics and the causes of the environmental problem, as well as the inventory of available resources and deficiencies in order to be compensated to face the problem in a shortest time and easiest available way.

As general rules:
1. It is important to keep a respect attitude towards the community needs.
2. In developing and underdeveloped communities, it is important to get the political support of the regional positions and the main political leadership.
During the prefeasibility stage, some features should be taken into consideration:

1. Demographic composition.
2. Community type.
3. Illiteracy rate.
4. Female educational level.
5. Cultural aspects.
6. Type of prevailing jobs.
7. Income average per person.
8. Poverty index.
In order to be aware of those features many study methods could be followed such as:

- **Focus group with the public:**
  - A 20 - 60 minutes direct meeting were conducted between the projects teams and 6-8 participants of local people who
    - had at least 21 years old and
    - hadn’t participated in focus group in the past 6 months, or
    - hadn’t worked to government.
  - The manual screening tool was used to recruit participants from diverse demographics backgrounds for the two projects.
  - Results of demographic screening for the focus groups in the two projects are summarized in the next table:
Cont., focus group meetings:

### Results of demographic screening of the communities of the two projects:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Matrouh</th>
<th>Dakahlia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>90 %</td>
<td>65 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>35 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average age:</strong></td>
<td>42 years</td>
<td>46 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income per month $:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 90 $</td>
<td>60 %</td>
<td>45 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90 to less than 180$</td>
<td>25 %</td>
<td>19 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 180 $</td>
<td>15 %</td>
<td>36 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Area Type:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>15 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub Urban</td>
<td>30 %</td>
<td>20 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>60 %</td>
<td>65 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiteracy</td>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>38 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Schools</td>
<td>40 %</td>
<td>29 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Schools</td>
<td>14 %</td>
<td>23 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>2 %</td>
<td>10 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The focus group meetings had the following targets:

✓ Studying the socioeconomic indicators of the community.

✓ Setting up some keys of success such as:
  - Understanding the needs of the community.
  - Defining & evaluating the role of related working bodies.
  - Encouraging the local community involvement.
  - Encouraging the local community initiatives.
2. The configuration stage;

At this stage identifying the appropriate entrances is essential to create the community awareness. Interests, needs, and hopes that they aspire, to be analyzed.

The working plan will be installed at this stage.

As general rules It is important to:

• Determine the appropriate mechanism and plan for each of the different society segments.
• Propose the alternatives that might help significantly as possible solutions and that may be as preface for the next stage.
• Break the in mind statement "It will never happen to me".
3. The application stage:

At this stage the public awareness strategy will work together and side by side with the implementation plan in order to face the problems.

As general rules It is important to:

- **Focus on:**
  - what has been learnt before.
  - The progress in the implementation plan that has been achieved.
- The most important issue in this stage is to stick to the time table that was early announced to keep the level of trust with the local community.
3.1. Dissemination of information through students:

✓ In this phase in the two projects, a clear message and simple information were sent to the student parents, through their kids in order to:

1. Wider dissemination of the information within the region.
2. Interesting of people who are not involved in the project.
3. Implementation of the concept of disaster mitigation which includes tolerance and adaptation mechanisms.

Students of some schools scattered in the implementation area were involved into direct meetings using proper announcing method related to their...
One of the very effective methods to communicate with the schools students were Bezra magazine and puppet show.

- Young students interacted positively with the show expresses their opinions, ideas.
- They also carried out a clear message to their parents at home particularly their mothers with whom it was difficult to directly communicate in the two projects.
- It was also gave a wonderful opportunity to explore women's opinions and wishful thinking of the community problems in the region and share her views on decision making for the problems through her kids.
Representatives of civil society were chosen based on their experience, education and awareness on natural resources and related community problems, to discuss with experts, business sector, local authorities, the related national sovereign entities, global funding mechanisms representatives if any and representatives of local media agencies.

This was also a opportunity to discuss the observed results from the previous two phases and negotiate around the proposed plans and steps forward.

In this stage the decision making were taken by the communities themselves, therefore the awareness stages of attention, enthusiasm, defense, and then adoption were existed successfully.
3.3 Working with the regional media bodies:

✓ As a matter of fact, The regional media campaigns were the most capable ones to interact with the local community to deal with the existing problems.

✓ There are two types of media coverage of the environmental issues;

  • The first type is the amputated coverage of press and media with superficial coverage for the problem.

  • The second type is the integrated coverage of press and media with the deep analysis of the problems causes and consequences.
There are some "regulations" that media sector should take into consideration when dealing with the environmental issues;

- **Official spokesperson should be:**
  - Well educated and neutral.
  - Never express his opinions or passions.
  - Familiar with the problem details and consequences.

- **Official statements should be written in:**
  - Full precision and caution.
  - Decisively and accurately.
  - Neither over nor underestimates the implications of the problem.
The media should commit the following:

- Neutrality.
- To publish the official statements as it is without comment, additions or deletions.
- Information published only if fully verified.

Unfortunately we found that the first type is the dominant one in the two regions:

- So we had to take this responsibility either with the direct meetings and workshops when the internet was not existed yet,
- Or through YouTube and the private TV channels as paid programmes.
4. The stability stage;

At this stage it is important to ensure & confirm the achievements.

A strong success signal for the community awareness campaign should be appeared clearly.

As general rules It is important to:
- Focus on what has achieved already.
- Inform with the next steps and expected results with reference to the time table.
- Answer all the queries related to the troubleshooting and the related backup plans.
5. **The follow-up stage;**

At this stage, as a well-known rule the learnt lessons should be kept in mind. Efforts should be done occasionally to stress on the comparison between **before** and **after** and link them with the conclusion "what if we didn't implement this environmental project?" This will make the achievements long live.

In order to evaluate the community capacity to recover from a problem some capability parameters should be evaluated:

1. Recognize the risks and current threats and potentials.
2. Avoidance of the threats, in a scientific and effective manner.
3. Restore equilibrium to the system in the shortest possible time.
4. Overcome the negative effects of the problem.
5. Extract the lessons learnt from the problem to prevent redundancy in future.
Cont., The follow-up stage;

Certain levels were found to be important to be followed up during the four previous stages in order to evaluate the community awareness capacity, using the direct meeting method using a specified questionnaire form.

1. **The attention level**: This reflects that the community is just perceived the problem.
2. **The enthusiasm level**: This indicates that the community is in a positive position and ready to be promoted into the next level.
3. **The defense level**: This measures how far the community is convinced with the action plan.
4. **The adoption level**: This measure the ability of the community member to adopt the idea of the implementation plan and disseminate the idea into other society members.
Lessons learnt?

History lesson...
'80s XL spiral
'90s PA spiral
Over all Lessons learnt:

- Never compare and discuss a community ethics, but accept and deal with it.
- Use their needs to help in reaching their benefits.
- Be neutral and never be a part of any conflict existed in the implementation area.

- Never promise of what you cant do.
- Stick to the time frame that you early announced.
- Never pay your neutrality as a price to have the needed political support.
- If you are mistaken say it clearly and announce your backup plan to them.
- Some incentives and gifts help you like a magic.
- Be patient the needed change in concepts takes a lot of efforts and time.
Thank you