

Communication Strategies for Preventing Violence against Women: Case Study of Timor-Leste¹

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Abstract: In an in-deep patriarchal and post-conflict country like Timor-Leste, gender equality and women rights are hard to be understood and accepted. Violence against woman is customary and domestic violence (DV) is the most common form of Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV). According to official statistics, 40 per cent of young girls and women, between ages of 15 and 49, experienced some form physical and sexual violence. However, these figures do not illustrate a worst reality. After years of intense work from organizations of Timorese women, with the support of international organizations, some changes are visible. But must more need

to be done and communication has a crucial role.

This article explores the communication strategies implemented in Timor-Leste on prevention of DV. Change behaviours and promote social change are not an easy task. It takes time, method and persistence. Therefore, this research withdraws lessons from recent past, based on analysis to communication programs implemented in Timor-Leste for over one decade. This article draws from communication development theories, sociology, anthropology and psychology to offer an interdisciplinary perspective on communication for preventing violence against woman.

Key Words: Communication, Development, Violence against woman, Behavioural and Social Change

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1. Introduction

THE lecture on Communication for Development (C4D) focuses mainly on the international attention given to the programs for HIV/AIDS control, mass immunization, nutrition, agriculture, family planning, education, highlighted in international reports, initiatives and meetings. Domestic Violence (DV) is neglected though communication scholars and practitioners identify examples of success, essentially related to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Even so it is an issue that has hitherto been largely overlooked by development experts. By combining the two perspectives of wider C4D and focusing specially in the fostering of DV prevention, this paper offers a unique, interdisciplinary synthesis of different fields, answering questions that are relevant for both of them. This study thus hopes to take the first step in remedying the palpable lack of research in this important area of development for gender equality.

This paper presents a case-study of the latest experiences in applying various communication approaches ranging from advocacy, social mobilization, participation development communication, interpersonal communication, entertainment education and mass communication in Timor-Leste. By no means does it suggest that there is a singular approach to strategic communication, rather, that strategic communication involves a mix of appropriate multiple communication approaches that can foster individual and social change. While information and key messages remain crucial, it is important to look beyond those messages and help to develop environments where inclusion of individuals can flourish. Communication plays a crucial role in reducing gender inequality, providing tools to people involve in the process of their own development and empowerment. Little of this will be simple to implement.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Communication for Development (C4D)

It is extremely important to have a clear understanding of what the term Communication for Development (C4D) does and does not encompass. Development Communication – or Communication for Development - enables people, particularly the vulnerable groups, to participate in shaping decisions to ameliorate their own wellbeing. Using a variety of interpersonal, dialogue and mass media communication channels to engage, motivate and educate beneficiaries of development programs, C4D promotes changes in people behaviours and attitudes and increases their participation in the development process. This role of communication as empowerment and participatory tools contrast with how most communication is understood within development system, which distinguishes itself from external relations and public relations.

2.3 Participatory Communication

Participatory Communication for Development (PCD) endeavour is essentially building relationships with the community and thereby facilitates collective action for social change. It empowers local communities to discuss and address their problems and practices, as well as to engage other stakeholders in building an improved policy environment. For communication to be effective it must integrate different perspectives and knowledge from all actors and agents to ensure the appropriation by local communities for sustainability of the social change process and, at the same time, influence policy and decision-making processes at all levels (family, community, local and national).

2.4 Advocacy Communication

One decade ago, the international development community (UNFPA, 2002: 53) saw advocacy as a “*relatively new program area in the field of Communication for Development*”. It was seen as public relations to promote a project or organization or it could be reduced to support function of service delivery or policies, through activities such as media events. The advocacy component of a communication strategy should inform and motivate appropriate leaders to create a supportive environment by taking action, such as changing policies (legal reform or enactment of new laws), allocating resources (funding, social or political alliances, or mobilizing resources). It is, therefore, imperative to have the involvement of individuals, groups and all sectors of society for the effectiveness of the advocacy, as defended by Servaes (2003: 23).

2.5 Behaviour Change Communication (BCC)

The Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) aims to change knowledge, practices, attitudes and behaviours of individuals, families and communities, as well as stimulate and facilitate wider social change at local and national levels. These are achieved through dialogue with individuals and groups to inform, motivate and promote behaviour change. Over the last decades, BCC has evolved to strategic communication programs, leading to better integrated approaches - community mobilisation, interpersonal communication, community empowerment, public relations, public policy and media advocacy, entertainment-education, social marketing – where a sound understanding of its audiences and communication channels are crucial features to improve the reach and effectiveness of interventions that seek to facilitate social change. This evolution reflects emerging theories and empirical observations that point to the importance of people-centred, multidisciplinary, behaviour-oriented and strategic approach to communication interventions (Hosein *et al.*, 2009: 536).

2.6 Communication for Social Change (CFSC)

Communication for Social Change (CFSC) attempts to integrate different theories and approaches in development communication. CFSC emphasizes dialogue as central to development and the role of poor people as agents of change through participation and empowerment. While CFSC's strength is that it has emerged largely from practitioners on the ground, some critics claim that it has failed to back its arguments and evaluation methodologies with rigorous academic analysis modelling and theory. Scholars and practitioners, at the 8th United Nations Inter-Agency Roundtable on C4D (UNFPA et al., 2002: 47-48), admit that a number of issues surrounding CFSC remain uncertain, including evaluation regarding who owns the process, who is the most appropriate audience and whether tools should be used. Once again, donor pressure can lead to partial results, while consultants' evaluation continues to be dominated by western approaches.

3. Gender-based Violence (GBV)

Gender-based violence (GBV) ranges from sexual harassment to rape, domestic violence (DV) to trafficking. However, there is a dimension usually forgotten by development experts, particularly the one related to gender issues: cultural and social norms, which are highly influential in shaping individual behaviour, including the use of violence. Domestic violence (or intimate partner violence by World Health Organization - WHO) is one of the most common forms of GBV, including sexual violence, with deep cultural and social roots and intimate partners perpetuate the majority of cases. WHO (Butchart *et al.*, 2010: 11) defines intimate partner violence as "*behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including act of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours*". Further, DV is a cycle hard to be broken. Understanding the nature and scope of this cycle is possible to find factors that originated it, find solutions for its prevention, and improve the wellbeing of families and communities.

3.1 The nature, costs and impacts of Domestic Violence (DV)

The harm caused by DV can last a lifetime and span generations, with serious adverse effects on health, education, employment, crime and economic wellbeing of individuals, families and communities. It is widely recognized as an important development constraint that retards economic growth and poverty reduction (Grown *et al*, 2005; Butchart *et al*, 2010; Krug *et al*, 2002). However, although acknowledging those aspects, this type of violence is still relatively invisible once it occurs within a private sphere and is often accepted as the feature of male-female relationships.

Domestic violence occurs at home, at the hands of relatives or parents, manifested as sexual and physical violence and psychological abuse. Women are primary victims of this type of violence, followed by children, and men are primarily the perpetrators. Such violence has also adverse economic impact with the average cost of goods and services used in preventing violence, treating victims per person and for women experiencing at least one occurrence of physical intimate partner violence more than twice. Besides, the overall costs to society are greater when it hampers productivity, reduces human capital and undermines economic growth (Grown *et al*, 2005; Butchart *et al*, 2010).

In addition, another form of violence within families, often forgotten in lecture, is child maltreatment³, in particular physical, sexual and emotional abuse by parents and caregivers. Children who witness intimate partner violence, or are victims themselves, tend to imitate and perpetuate that behaviour (Grown *et al*, 2005; Butchart *et al*, 2010; Krug *et al*, 2002).

3. WHO refers child maltreatment as “physical and emotional mistreatment, sexual abuse, neglect and negligent treatment of children, as well as to their commercial or other exploitation. (...) The perpetrators of child maltreatment should be parents and other family members; caregivers; friends; acquaintances; strangers; others in authority – such as teachers, soldiers, police officers and clergy; employers; health care workers; and other children” (WHO – ISPCAN, 2006), available at http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/activities/child_maltreatment/en/index.html

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Propose of the study

The goal of this study is to provide a direction to communication specialists to play a more strategic role in the behavioural and social changes and leave space for further research. Today there is acknowledgement of the impact of communication in development programs, however limited time and resources constrain communication effectiveness. Based on Timor-Leste context, this research aims to be a reflection on C4D and its role for a positive change in communities regarding SGBV, specially Domestic Violence (DV): What communication strategies have being used in DV? What communication practitioners need to have for most effective communication strategies? Are only the victims the main target groups of those communication strategies? To what extent C4D has to use different tools in the rural and urban areas?

4.2 Case study as research method

For discussing the role of communication on prevention of DV in Timor-Leste, within a process of nation building, one makes use of a case study methodology to clarify the process of applying communication strategies in a complex reality. According to London Open University (2000: 207), case study research can help explain why an observed phenomenon is occurring rather than simply show what is occurring, through open-ended interviews and observational studies.

4.3 Data generation

The object of this study was conducted in the field for over two years based on primary research for a close knowledge. Afterwards, diverse methods were used to collect data with the objective of verifying axioms, which include statistics,

interviews and direct observation. The information gathered have enable one to acknowledge perspectives and perceptions of the different actors regarding the subject of this study, as well as verify and validated assumptions that resulted from direct observation and content analysis of communication materials. A restrict number of victims were also interviewed for additional information and to have their perspectives. It is important to note that their answers are not representative of victim's opinion. For that purpose, a new study is needed based on a survey, focus, for instance, on victim's perceptions to messages from diverse communication interventions.

5. Case Study: Timor-Leste - Communication Strategies for Prevention of Violence Against Woman

5.1 Context: Violence in post-conflict context

The brutal Indonesia's occupation has changed the life of thousands of Timorese people and, therefore, their behaviours⁴. Thousands of people were dead and hundreds of women and girls were victims of sexual assault. It is generally accepted that violence of the occupation and the associated trauma has resulted in a more violent society today (Wandita et al., 2006, CAVR, 2005).

The Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation of Timor-Leste (commonly known by its Portuguese acronym CAVR⁵ (Comissão de

4. This is well described in "Colibere, um herói timorense..." (Colibere, a Timorese hero), a novel written by Domingos Sousa, Lidel, Lisboa, 2007. The Timorese novelist describes the transformation of behaviours in common Timorese people after suffering extreme violent actions, such as torture and emotional violence, perpetrated by Indonesian military forces and mauhus (Timorese supporters).

5. The CAVR's report, entitled *Chega!*, has more than two thousand pages with detailed description of, among other, sexual abuses perpetrated by Indonesian's forces. This report where presented to the President of the Republic of Timor-Leste, Parliament and Government, in 2006. The serious crimes committed at that time still to be judged. Available at <http://www.cavr-timorleste.org/cheгаFiles/finalReportPort/07.7-Violencia-Sexual.pdf>

Acolhimento, Verdade e Reconciliação de Timor-Leste) (Niner, 2011: 47; CAVR, 2005) found a link between high rates of domestic violence (DV) and sexual assault and the period of armed conflict, which induced behaviours that are more violent: “(...) *domestic violence was a common occurrence in the current lives of many victims. For example, some male survivors of detention and torture told the Commission that they had fallen into a pattern of violent behaviours*” (Niner, 2011: 47). The witnesses of killings and other forms of violence led to widespread physical and psychological trauma among the survivors, including children who are adults nowadays. Living and growing up in a society where violence is ‘normal’ and thus enduring constant fear, has implications far beyond what is possible to image and with intergenerational consequences.

This is expressed by Phyllis Ferguson (2011: 59) on his article on *Progress in legislating domestic violence and gender-based violence in Timor-Leste*: “*An overwhelming need for truth and justice over events of the past continues; this particularly conditions the presently expressed frustrations of sufferers of DV and SGBV, or those who attempt to assist them. Controlling women and children through violence and the threat of violence has become a culturally accepted assertion of power by Timorese men. In part it is colonially inherited patriarchy well learned and reinforced by the memory of Indonesian violence. Freedom did not mitigate the perpetration of the acceptance of violence. It helped provide the stage for its reassertion, in part as reclaiming of suppressed ‘traditional culture’*”. Even today, violence becomes the ‘normal’ way of solving conflicts. This reality is, furthermore, confirmed by the reports of PNTL and UNPOL. The violence, in general, and against women and girls, in particular, become institutionalized within Timorese community.

5.1.2 When being a woman represents vulnerability

Many studies have been conducted in Timor-Leste since 1999 by national and international organizations, examining the prevalence, incidence, cultural context, service provision for victims and legal mechanisms available. Those studies have shown that it has a long history of culturally accepted forms of gender roles and behaviour has led to the reinforcement of violence against

women, often perceived as a private matter within households and families and that should not be discussed in public (Pearson: 2000; Robertson, 2005; DNE, 2010: 225 – 248; Oxfam, 2010; Ferguson, 2011; Kovar, 2011; Niner, 2011; APSC-TL: 7, SEPI, 2012: 15).

The Timor-Leste Demographic and Health Survey (TLDHS) (DNE 2010) explores women's attitudes regarding specific behaviours as a proxy for justifying patriarchal behaviours that puts men in a higher social position than women. This survey indicates that 38 per cent of women aged between 25-29 years are particularly at risk of abuse. It shows also that 35 per cent of women age 15-49 has suffered of violence at same point since age 15 at the hands of an intimate partner. The main perpetrators of sexual violence against even-married women are current husbands/partners (71%) and former husbands/partners (9%). Thirty-six per cent of married women have suffered from spousal or partner abuse, whether physical, emotional or sexual. From those, one-third experienced some form of these types of violence by their husband or partner in the past year.

Most of the time, the alcohol is associated to DV. The survey indicates that women whose husbands are often drunk are more likely to suffer from any of those types of violence than women whose husbands do not drink (60% and 26%, respectively). Key findings (*idem*: 18) show, for instance, that in the rural areas 76 to 56 per cent of those who reported violence were between 15 and 49 years old, followed by Dili where it reaches 56 and 53 per cent. In Baucau, the second biggest city after the capital – Dili – 44 per cent have experienced physical violence since age 15 and 31 per cent have experienced physical or sexual violence committed by their husband/partner. Reported cases of domestic violence go beyond physical and sexual violence. Verbal abuse, restrictions on freedom of movement and withholding funds constitute violent behaviour (*idem*: 235). The table 1 shows what types of violence that women and young girls are victims. Nevertheless, one needs to be careful when analysing statistics. The current data is not totally reliable. As experience reveals and admitted by development agencies (Kovar, 2011), the majority of cases are underreported.

Percentage of women age 15-49 who have experienced different forms of violence, by current age, Timor-Leste 2009-2010⁶

Age	Physical violence	Sexual violence	Physical and sexual violence	Physical or sexual violence	Number of women
15-19	28.5	0.2	1.8	30.5	700
15-17	28.2	0.2	0.1	28.5	446
18-19	29.1	0.1	4.7	33.9	254
20-24	33.9	1.5	0.9	36.3	513
25-29	44.9	0.8	3.1	48.8	403
30-39	40.0	1.4	3.6	45.1	765
40-49	34.5	1.3	2.0	37.8	570
Total	35.8	1.0	2.3	39.2	2951

Table 1: Different forms of violence against women and young girls

Scientists have been trying to explain those violence behaviours against women in Timor-Leste. The assumption with more acceptance is that the Timorese society is intensely patriarchal and this social organization ensures traditional customs and practices are upheld, such as *barlak* (bride-price), wherein women are typically afforded substandard rights and respect (Robertson, 2005; Oxfam, 2010; Kovar, 2011; Ferguson, 2011, Khan and Hyati, 2012). The Asosiasaun Mane kontra Violensia (Men's Association Against Violence – AMKV) (Araújo, 2004: 140) states that: “*gender inequality issues in Timor-Leste should have their solution in the future, but their roots are embedded in the past. Men have complete control and dominate all aspects of social, economic and political life. Men are the unchallenged decision makers in affairs relating to tradition, law and custom.*” [And it goes forward admitting that] “*this unchecked power*

6. TLDHS (DNE, 2010: 233).

results in men having the freedom to do whatever they want. At its most extreme, this power extends to having control over the life and death of a woman. [Therefore], domestic violence in Timor-Leste is very common. (...) As in many other countries around the world this type of behaviour by men towards women is tolerated, as there is a widespread view that culture or tradition allows a husband to 'educate' his wife and children by whatever means necessary". Achieving gender equality in a country such as Timor-Leste is, therefore, technically difficult and challenging.

5.2.2 Cultural representation of gender and violence

The social scientist Daniel S. Simião reveals a different dimension of violence on his paper *Representando Corpo e Violência: a invenção da 'violência doméstica' em Timor-Leste* (2006)⁷. The researcher analyses the perceptions of physical and moral violence and their relations with body, family and education. Simião (*idem*: 141) realized that DV is a new concept introduced by the international community and local agents that advocate for gender equality. According to his findings, for Timorese people violence is more related to moral - which originates shame and embarrassment - than physical aggression. Actually, the physical aggression is perceived as a disruption of the natural order of social relations, including gender relations. This is confirmed by other studies stressing that DV is locally addressed "*as an offence against the community and social relations between families rather than an offence against an individual*" (Kovar, 2011: 10 - 11). That is, what is violence in western perspective gains different dimensions in Timor-Leste.

On the other hand, the Australian researcher Sara Niner indicates another rejection to the new values. She assumes that Timorese society is dominated by a military male elite, whom fought side-by-side with females, that now is patriotically promoting Timorese culture, "while denigrating the imposition of foreign 'gender equity' policies, which some have declared will destroy Timorese

7. Translation from Portuguese: "Representing Body and Violence: the invention of domestic violence in Timor-Leste".

culture” (Niner, 2011:41). On her article “*East Timor: new President, same problems for women*” (2012), based on the violence perpetrated by Indonesians during the time they were in this half side of the island of Timor.

5.3 Communication Strategies

This session addresses communication strategies implemented in the last decade to prevent violence against women, in particular domestic violence (DV), in Timor-Leste. Those strategies include advocacy, behaviour and social communication change, social mobilization, mass media and participatory communication.

5.3.1 From Gender Awareness to Prevention

a) Advocacy

A wide range of communication initiatives are being harnessed in Timor-Leste to support elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and achieving gender equality, such as advocating for legal frameworks and using dialogue as a tool for changing social and cultural attitudes to remove barriers to women’s participation in wider society (Kovar, 2011: 10). Advocacy is part of an integrated communication strategy, which also included media and social mobilization, with many stakeholders, in order to enrol institutions and community networks to strengthen their participation on problems related to gender. The *Gabinete de Assessoria para a Promoção da Igualdade (GAPI)* [Cabinet for Promotion and Equality], under the Prime Minister Office, was the outcome of the advocacy program. This cabinet aims to ensure principles of equality and protection against discrimination against women. Between 2004 and 2006, GAPI in collaboration with Civil Society Organizations (CSO) began an “extensive social mobilization campaign” in all districts, targeting “local administration and civil society” with the purpose of “raising awareness” and “strengthening capacity [at local level] on women’s rights” (CEDAW, 2008).

Everold Hosein referred in interview for this study that: *“communication only results within an enabling environment. As in marketing, we can only sell a product or a service when it is in market. In this case, communication is only effective if you have services in place and working, otherwise people will not change their behaviours even with the best communication strategy”*.

In 2007, the IV Constitutional Government of Timor-Leste (GoTL) was inaugurated and GAPI became the *Secretaria de Estado para a Promoção da Igualdade* (SEPI) [Secretary of State for Promotion of Equality]. GBV boosted, then, concerns of officials and local agencies and led the public information campaigns for prevention of violence against women. In a participatory communication approach driven by the principle of women’s rights, SEPI continued to mobilize local communities to discuss the draft law and advocate for policy-makers approve the LADV. The communities had, therefore, the opportunity to address their concerns, problems, practices and expectations through dialogue during the consultation process.

b) Social mobilization

Training sessions and community meeting were part of social mobilization strategy to discuss gender issues and the draft law of the Law Against Domestic Violence (LADV). The objective was gaining support from local authorities and communities to support the Government, national and international agencies efforts for people be aware of subjects as women and children’s rights and create acceptance for LADV. However, this strategy was interrupted during the Crisis of 2006.

Once the law was approved, in July 2010, social mobilization continued as strategy to disseminate the law and involve audience for raising awareness amongst service providers, police officers, teachers and community leaders. In community meetings, SEPI used banners with photos and simple and clear messages for illustrating examples for better perception and understanding by target group, as the bellow testimony of SEPI representative: *“We had to explain what is domestic violence and its negative effects in community life to make them understand why it should not exist. We also talked about the Community Law, in*

which, according to article 11, the Suco Chief have to collaborate with police by informing and supporting victims of DV”.

c) Interpersonal Communication

For such sensitive subjects as women’s rights and DV, the strategy moved from social mobilization to interpersonal communication with the objective of involving local leaders and for them to pass on the messages to their community members. The final goal is to increase the number of denounces and, additionally, promote positive behaviours.

United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT, the last peacekeeping mission that ended its mandate in December 2012) and others national and international NGOs organized also workshops and training sessions with similar purpose. However, who works in the field feels that things are not as good as they should be. *“Recently, there was a domestic law that is been promulgated [but] the community in general isn’t aware of the extent of it or what it means”*, says Danielle Winzenried, an Australian lawyer working as a program officer with local legal aid NGO Fundasaun ECM, based in Bacau, as volunteer.

Actually, many activities have been arranged, though without a framework with common objectives and messages. This situation has changed in terms of objectives with the National Action Plan for Gender-Based Violence (NAPGBV). This framework has a holistic approach on issues related to GBV, focusing in four strategic areas with medium and long-term goals: prevention of GBV, provision of services to victims, justice and monitoring and evaluation. The NAPGBV is a step forward for eliminating *“stereotypes and harmful practices that contribute toward GBV, including DV, through changing attitudes and behaviour”* (SEPI, 2012: 19).

5.3.2 Behaviour Change Communication for Prevention of Violence against women

“Gender violence is about context and we have to work on that”, says UNMIT’s Gender Adviser. Therefore, SEPI, in close collaboration with its development

partners, recognizes that *“preventing GBV requires actions to address the underlying causes of GBV, including discrimination and gender inequality, which results in the perceived lower status of women. (...) alarming trends have been identified in various studies regarding tolerance on GBV in Timorese communities. It is essential, therefore, to create change by directing efforts at attitude and behaviour change and increasing substantive equality”* (SEPI, 2012: 15). Similarly, World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes promotion of equality as a critical part of violence prevention (WHO, 2009: 3-4): *“Evidence suggest, however, that gender inequalities increase the risk of violence by men against women and inhibit the ability to seek protection.”* Having this in mind, SEPI’s strategy on prevention *“outlines activities that seek to effect long-term change by challenging the prevailing mind-sets within communities”* (SEPI, 2012: 15-16).

According to UNICEF, behaviour change communication (BCC) addresses knowledge, attitudes and practices of individuals, while advocacy and social mobilisation contribute towards the creation of an enabling social and political environment that can support behaviour change at the individual level. It reiterates the fact that behaviour change and social change are inter-related and need to occur across all participants for a program to make a difference (UNICEF, 2005: 7).

Normally, violence prevention is the least used anti-violence strategy even if potentially the most effective in the long-term. Prevention includes raising awareness, disseminating information on gender-sensitive human rights methodologies, media and communications campaigns, and extensive efforts directed toward building non-violent, gender-sensitive curricula in primary and secondary educational institutions (Drezin and Lloyd-Laney, 2003: 39; WHO, n/a). All of these strategies involve identifying appropriate approaches and effective communication channels, as well as designing messages and communication materials, based on the sound knowledge of the environment in which one is working, the audience one seeks to reach and how the audience thinks. Experience shows that well-intended communication strategies are not enough for an effective result. Focus on the objectives of the program, creativity

should work side by side with careful planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation for sustainable results.

The following sections analyse messages and communication channels to an intended audience in order to better achieve communication objectives. It explores questions of how can one obtain information about our target groups (research-based approach), how messages should be designed and decide what communication channels and dissemination strategies are most effective for reaching the various target audience.

5.3.3 Key agents for change

Key agents are those who must make the change, often policy makers or opinion leaders, the latter with a great influence in Timor-Leste. Depending on the strategy, they might consist of the male perpetrators who must curb their violent behaviour, the courtroom judges and police officers who need to be more gender-sensitive or the journalists who need to cover GBV in a more equitable and accurate manner. But they also consist of those who benefit from the changes. They are women and girls, victims and others that live in low sensitive-gender communities. The target audience should be often who works to bring change, such as NGOs and women's organizations, government, donors, United Nations System (missions and agencies) and other partners who support should help to achieve the campaign's objectives (Drezin and Lloyd-Laney, 2003: 40).

a) Community leaders as best sources of information

The Communication and Media Survey (UNMIT, 2011) indicates that community leaders are the best (33 per cent) and most trusted (25 per cent) source of information, followed by television (20 per cent) and national radio (12 per cent) broadcasters. The police are also mentioned in both aspects (16 and 9 per cent, respectively). Friends and neighbours can also be a source of information (7 per cent). This preference should be explained by the fact that there is a lack of information access through mass media, especially in rural

areas, and the word of mouth is one of the most effective ways for spreading messages in Timor-Leste.

Without other communications tools than oral tradition, Timorese people trust their community leaders and community members to get information from “outside”. In each village or community has a person in who people thrust the most and listen to.

The National Action Plan for Gender-Based Violence (NAPGBV) (SEPI, 2012) covers interpersonal communication in public campaigns for raising awareness through “*resource persons at the district level to sensitize the general public on prevention of GBV and LADV*”. In face of social and cultural barriers, which inhibit women from participating in social events, trained staff to talk directly with population in remote areas is seen as an effective mean to ensure that women and girls are informed on DV and involved the process of meeting an important milestone for their village for prevention of violence. Nevertheless, for its accomplishment, community leaders should be consulted and sensitize for its implementation for better accepteness from their community members.

The NAPGBV targets mainly “*national and local leaders (including Suco Chiefs, Church officials and traditional leaders) to increase knowledge of gender equality, GBV and Domestic Violence issues*” (2012, 16). Other audiences are equally essential for sustainable changes in all structure to create opportunities for collective actions and positive behaviours. A deeper analysis of the NAPGVB reveals target groups, such as police and military officers, Government and Parliament members, Civil Society Organizations (CSO), women’s organizations and teachers, but it leaves aside judges, personnel of service providers, parents and caregivers.

b) Youth: the generational change

Children and youth may produce generational changes in terms of behaviours and attitudes. For that reason, both should be observed as an opportunity for sustainable changes. Young generations better educated have a more open mind and nurture new values and intended behaviours inside households and for the next generations. School-based communication programmes should hence

address gender norms and attitudes before they became deeply ingrained in children and youth. “The youth better educated are changing. Education is an investment”, emphasizes UNICEF in Timor-Leste.

Teachers are similarly an important target group. Testimonies disclose that most of them use violence to punish or educate their students. In spite of this situation, empirical observation demonstrates that they should be a channel on civic education amongst their students, namely human rights, gender and sexuality for conflict and violence prevention, such as sexual abuse in adolescence, which is a common occurrence in Timor-Leste demonstrated by baseline data, police reports and testimonies. Through education it is possible to empower communities for engaging positively with peers and family members, increasing children and youth’s self-esteem and feel supported in discussing and processing trauma from abuse and violence.

c) Engaging men and Women for equal goal

The holistic approach of SEPI’s strategy on the NAPGBV presents a new opportunity to engage men for sustainable behaviour change. This is surely a positive aspect that deserves to be highlighted, which is confirmed by WHO (2009: 5): “*there is some evidence that (...) empower women without engaging men should actually cause friction and conflict between partners, especially in societies with rigid gender roles [as Timorese society]*”.

One findings suggest that women are now more encouraged to speak out and there is a growing awareness that cultural traditions fostering violence are no longer acceptable under law. In turn, Timorese women have more actively opposed male hegemony, domestic conflicts have increased and more men have resorted to DV. These findings are compatible with deductions of the TLDHS (DNE, 2010: 247), in which baseline data reveals that working women who have an independent source of income are more likely to report having experienced physical violence. This should be an assumption that independent women are challenging the established social norms of being dependent on their partners for their livelihood and, therefore, their new role should subject them to greater violence. These findings demonstrate that responses to DV must not focus

exclusively on women, but also targeting men to prevent a backlash. When gender roles become more flexible, most women enjoy greater power, status and economic independence and the threat of violence against them decreases. It is important, therefore, to engage both men and women, boys and girls in interventions that promote gender equality and prevent violence against women.

The inclusion of men, comprising those that for professional reasons deal with DV, as target groups is then essential for the success of communication programmes on prevention of violence against women. Findings from qualitative research indicate that some gender projects have failed directly due to exclusion of men and perhaps even resulted in an increase in DV. Based on one analysis, the exclusion of men in educational activities on human rights and DV resulted in an unequal information and knowledge. Communication interventions enable women to gain confidence and a feeling of empowerment. Consequently, they have begun to challenge their husbands' patriarchal attitudes. However, their husbands' reaction is increased violence for being excluded from the whole process.

Knowing your intended audience also means knowing what channels should be used. Experience has shown that high-involvement behaviours that strategic communication addresses require greater exposure to the key messages developed in order to stimulate behavioural change. Broadly speaking, the communication practitioner needs to choose the most effective channels for ensuring effective and increasing message's exposure (Owen *et al.*, n/a: 50; *idem*: 7). The next session examines, therefore, what are the most appropriate communication channels in Timor-Leste to reach effectively the intended audience.

5.3.4 Getting the message right

Communication in developing countries such as Timor-Leste face many challenges like high rate of illiteracy. Therefore, understanding the target audience – concerns, beliefs, needs and wants – is crucial to determine the content and language of the message and how should be disseminated. The former United Nations agency UNIFEM (Drezin and Lloyd-Lane, 2003: 7) describes messages as 'attention grabbers' once they "lead the audience into the larger

message". Basically, a great message should be clear, easy to understand and appealing to "consumers" in order to be notice and generate positive response. The communication professional should then research its intended audience and collect information to understand it. Demographic information is the first step for audience segmentation and find out specific behaviours and patterns, as well to identify what channels should be the best to reach them.

In this article, one analyses the 16' Days Campaign on Elimination of Violence Against Women in order to verify these and other axioms. It is a worldwide campaign promoted every year by the United Nations on November 25th and locally it is by SEPI. In 2002, it began with the slogan "Timorese culture does not have gender-based violence" [*Violensia basea ba géneru la'os kultura Timor-Leste nian*, in tetum] which is a clear effort of respect for local culture and values. Five years later, in 2007, United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT), in collaboration with UNIFEM (former United Nations Development Fund for Women), Asosiasaun Mane Kontra Violensia (AMKV) and UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund), launched another national campaign against domestic violence integrated in the world movement. Its slogan "Stop violence against women" [*Hapara violensia kontra feto*, in tetum] shows a clear shift in the message for the need of changing behaviours and attitudes and it is an example of contesting gender norms, cultural revitalisation and transformation in contemporary Timorese society (Niner, 2011: 48). However, empirical analysis and testimonies disclose that 16' Days Campaign was launched without intended success. That is, messages were ineffective. It did not respect the Timorese cultural aspects nor was it appealing for Timorese people, as indicated by the testimony of development workers: "*This campaign with dark posters, for example [Figure 1]. I could not understand what was about. Can you imagine the Timorese people? They could not understand the message neither its concept*", assumed UNMIT representative for Gender Justice. The UNFPA representative supports this point: "*The posters are really nice graphically. It shows men crossing arms. However, people do not understand the meaning of that gesture neither the concept of domestic violence*".

When developing a campaign message it should use emotiveness, be relevant, unexpected and memorable. Thus, the message should also be single-

mindful in its intent, that is, finding a core message for an intended audience. The best method of doing this is by testing several messages on intended audience members and getting the sense of which is the most powerful for intended messages come across loud and clear (Owen *et al.*, n/a: 42) and, consequently, to avoid unwanted results. This can be done in a simple manner by showing draft materials (as a rough-cut of a television or video script) to intended audience and asking them questions to verify if they understand the concept and the message it was intended to convey. These small initiatives to get some feedback can save time and funds. The pre-testing allows the professional to have a sense of the different kinds of reactions people should have towards the communication products (Drezin and Lloyd-Laney, 2003: 13-14).



Figure 1: Former President of the Republic, José Ramos-Horta, and the Prime Minister, Xanana Gusmão, are two of the faces of the Campaign against Domestic Violence in Timor-Leste

Other informants are unanimous regarding the message expressed on the above images: “They arrest the men that bit women”. The misinterpretation of the message reveals that the communication materials were not pre-tested by who designed this campaign neither research its intended audience and collect information to understanding it. Demographic information for audience

segmentation and specific behaviours and patterns should be the best to reach them. By doing it, the communication practitioner would find out that social and economic pressure are important aspects. Respondents confirm qualitative data demonstrating that Timorese women do not want their husbands to go to prison. The reasons for this reluctance are numerous, including family pressure, lack of information and lack of protection and follow-up services for victims of DV, while economic factors seem to be central to many women (Kovar, 2011: 21). Their economic dependency makes it difficult for victims to denounce and move forward to trial for fearing of being left alone without the breadwinner of the family. Additionally, guilt and stigmatization from family and community members for being responsible for putting her husband into prison and take him from his family are crucial features that keep DV underreported. These shows that when planning a GBV campaign is crucial understanding what people think and feel about gender, gender roles and abuse in order to develop a message that will be notice, absorbed and acted upon. These only make sense after understanding behaviours of the target audience. Having a behavioural understanding involves learning about people's acts, behaviours patters and routines regarding gender. Without this information, one cannot determine the best time and place to get messages across and ensure that activities are designed to achieve desired change (Owen et al., n/: 32 and 33).

Furthermore, posters and booklets are one of the most ineffective communication materials as demonstrated by the UNMIT's Communication and Media Survey (2011: 25). Posters, banners and public boards are mentioned by less than 2 per cent of respondents as a source of information. Even so, those are often communication tools chosen by the development partners in Timor-Leste. UNFPA (Robertson, 2005: 53) confirms this particular situation: "*posters have become a popular way of decorating homes and offices and have been developed on many issues besides gender-based violence, such as human rights, environment and health.*" The National Action Plan on Gender-based Violence (NAPGBV) includes also distribution of copies of the LADV, "*brochures explaining the concepts of GBV and DV in clear and simple terms*" and "*standardized training modules on the content of the LADV and nature of GBV*". The target groups are general population, local leaders, such as *Suco* Chiefs and respective Councils

and *Lian Nain* (community' spokespersons). Their low literacy requires simple messages to understand complex subjects such as LADV in their language⁸.

A great message needs a great communication channel to make the difference when reaching intended audience. The communication expert responsible for the campaign has then to choose different channels for each audience. Creativity should be the final ingredient for a successful campaign. Having all these in mind it is time to define the distribution of the communication materials, which have been pre-tested, and select their channels. Experience as shown that mixed communication channels are more appropriate and potent when message is sent out than one single channel. Besides, each communication channel has positive and negative factors by the time of choosing them: who is more likely to be reached, number of people reached, message medium, among others. The communication practitioners have, therefore, to pick and choose a mix of channels to convey the right message to the right people in a most effective and cost efficient way (Owen *et al.*, n/a: 53).

5.3.5 Using appropriate communication channels

Timor-Leste is a country of contrasts. Dili, the capital, is becoming a modern city in a developing country, where according to the Census of 2010 almost 200.000 people live (DNE, 2010) and the access to information is easier. Internet, newspapers, television, radio and other communication channels reach audiences and deliver messages. However, the reality in rural areas is reversed. The overwhelming majority of Timorese population live in rural areas (70.4 per cent) (*idem*), some of them in remote and isolate villages. The lack of transport and electricity, high rate of illiteracy and unemployment, especially amidst women, are features that induce communication into a hard assignment. While the influence of values such as human rights is becoming visible in Dili, where the international community is mainly deployed, as soon as one leaves

8. Timor-Leste has 13 ethnic-linguistic groups.

the capital, the weight of the cultural heritage⁹ overlaps the new mentality that arrives from the ‘big city’ and from the *malae*¹⁰. On contrary, in rural areas, few households have television and only a few points have Internet access. For that reason, communication strategies should have an integrated approach to overcome these constrains.

a) Mass Media

The Communication and Media Survey (CMS), published by UNMIT (2011), indicates that 25 per cent of the households do not own any media and communication equipment in 2010. The main media continue to be radio, with 47 per cent, followed by television (24 per cent). The Internet access is very limited (0.5 per cent), as well as computer ownership (2 per cent).

SEPI has planned “*working with the national media to sensitize journalists to the causes and consequences of GBV to improve reporting*” (SEPI, 2012: 16). It is interesting to observe that this is the only media strategy related to training journalists for improving the report of GBV. The lack of professionalism and independence of Timorese media are well known and identified for long time. Even with improvement from intensive training, the newspapers’ articles related to DV are mere description of facts. Empirical observation suggests that Timorese media still lacking analysis and reflection on issues such as human rights and gender equality through stories, chronicles and opinion articles. On the other hand, one acknowledges that public awareness campaigns and other interventions delivered via television, radio and other mass media can be effective for altering attitudes and behaviours but these are not being used in that direction. For example, Television of Timor-Leste (TVTL) broadcasts small spots advocating for couples to respect each other and explaining that DV is a

9. Domingos Sousa (2007) portrays well the pressure of the cultural heritage over individual’s life in his novel “Colibere, um herói timorense...” (Colibere, a Timorese hero), Lidel, Lisboa.

10. Malae is the word in Tetum for ‘foreigner’. Although, ‘malae’ refers to the ethnic group from Austrasia, in South Asia, in particular Malaysia, Sumatra, Borneo and Batavia, but also Philippines, Timor-Leste and Malagasy (an ethnic group from Madagascar). See Duran, F. (2009), *Istoria Timor-Leste Nian, Husi Pre-istoria to’o atualidade*, Lidel, 2a Edicao, Lisboa-Porto.

public crime and may destroy families. Normally, those videos are produced by local NGOs and focus on the value of family, using traditional values to reach mainly couples and used testimonies. For example, *Fokupers* made small videos with key messages that were broadcasted by TVTL. “*But then they had a conflict with TVTL and the broadcast stopped*”, confirmed UNFPA representative. This is an example that raises problems of repetition of messages and, consequently, its effectiveness. Therefore, media are misused in Timor-Leste, lacking repetition of advertising issues like DV. The absence of public awareness through media is hence a great loss for behaviour change strategy developed by SEPI and its development partners.

Following the example of other countries, Timor-Leste also produced its own soap opera with the objective of sensitizing viewers for women’s rights and other social issues, based on edu-entertainment communication strategy (EEC). *Suku Hali* tells the story of a Timorese family living at *Suco Hali*, in Dili, in twenty episodes. It portrays domestic violence, juvenile delinquency, gang’ problems, among other issues. Soap opera is useful when using viewers’ emotions and self-identification with actors to change negative behaviours. *Suku Hali* is, an example of national production that educates and promotes collective action for social and behaviour changes regarding domestic violence and youth problems and, at the same time, stimulates local acting.

Currently, communication channels go beyond mass media channels such as radio and television, as in early communication studies. Communication professionals should strive to reach its audience in different, more appropriate and relevant ways every day. In a developing country such as Timor-Leste, where communication practitioners found several constrains in their daily work, a multitude of channels for messages should extend into people’s homes, work, community spaces, and further stakeholders. Community radio and participatory theatre are other channels that have proven to be effective.

b) Participatory Theatre and Community Radio

Local culture (especially in rural villages) provides opportunities such as oral tradition that should be used in favour of messages dissemination. Respect

and engagement of local traditions in communication interventions are based on Participatory Communication Strategy (PCS), which aims to facilitate ideas exchange and empower local communities to address their problems and practices. In this specific case, it is grounded between agents of change and community members based on dialogue through information sharing and knowledge (both modern and ancient). Oral tradition should then be employed as facilitator for dissemination of information. For instance, community leaders should reach youth and adults through sessions of storytelling, traditional music and dances. In addition, local NGOs and Government agencies should collaborate with them for local performances in remote villages on issues that affect their communities, like prevention of violence, conflict resolution and respect for others. Participatory theatre and radio community are two tools based on these principles that are often implemented in development programs.

Community theatre (or participatory theatre) has an essential role regarding dissemination of messages, public awareness and sensitization, modifying people's perceptions and behaviours, where information spreads by word of mouth. Participants in the conference *Kria Teatry ba Kuminidade iha Timor-Leste (Making Community theatre in Timor-Leste)*, a joint conference by local NGO Ba Futuru and the Australian NGO Many Hand International, indicate that participatory theatre is an effective tool in rural villages, where high levels of illiteracy obliges the dissemination of simple and clear messages for easier comprehension by target audience. The director of Ba Futuru confirms it for this study: *"Normally, the population do not acknowledge these issues because the information only goes to community leaders. Those issues are not explained to them in a way they can understand"*. Participants emphasize the role of theatre on engaging communities to discuss issues normally considered taboo in remote areas, such as DV and women and children's rights. Their testimonies validate advantages of participatory theatre in developing context as making use of local values, beliefs, culture and languages for reaching audience through simple and subtle messages. Overall, community theatre gathers tradition and modernity.

Other communication tools should equally reach target audiences in an easy and effective way, such as Community Radio, which is a prevailed communication channel for dissemination of information and increase knowledge of rural

communities. A small radio that runs on batteries is enough to have access to sensitive issues, like DV that otherwise would not, in particular communities in remote locations and ethnic constrains. Households and communities have an opportunity to listen to educative programs through education-entertainment programs and small spots encouraging behaviour change. A positive example is the work developed by a popular local theatre group called *Bibi Bulak* (Crazy Sheep, in English), which created radio drama shows and advertising (Robertson, 2005: 53): “*Bibi Bulak presented live performances and recorded a song about GBV in hip-hop style to appeal to younger audiences. Besides being distributed to local radio stations, this song was used in workshops and tapes were distributed to mini-bus drivers, who are known for playing loud music as they travel [around the country]*”.

Many radio programs, from national to community level, address gender equality and women’s rights. Radio spots and interviews of women’s organizations, like *Rede Feto* and *Fokupers*, are often on air advocating for positive behaviours and attitudes. Listeners are motivated to participate and discuss these issues. However, direct observation reveals that lack of repetition and advertising of these programs limit their effectiveness in promoting discussion around those subjects.

6. Conclusion: Communication against violence, a never ending job

Violence against women and girls is one branch of gender inequality. Diverse communication strategies have been designed and implemented to end or prevent diverse types of violence against women and young girls in Timor-Leste. Some have brought positive results. Others have shown less positive results. Strategic communication (SC) should foster gender equality and help to overcome some of the cultural barriers responsible for gender inequality since it facilitates both individual and societal level changes, when linked to other program elements, acquainted of the local context and esteeming a multiplicity of communication approaches. But, for this to be achieved communication programs need to be

responsive to people's needs, wants and desires. Communication strategies should then follow a gender sensitive and holistic approach for effective results. For this to work, communication professionals need to acknowledge the full context before planning. Otherwise, they will not acknowledge which messages and communications channels are the most effective.

A major insight that emerged from this study is that there is a greater awareness regarding violence against women in Timor-Leste but behaviours have changed little. In one decade it has reached great achievements regarding violence against women, resulting of years of advocacy: domestic violence (DV) became a public crime, services are being provided to victims, including legal support, and a joint programme is being led by SEPI for strengthening country-level response on gender based-violence (GBV). It is possible to observe increased awareness and knowledge regarding violence against women. However, at the same time, baseline data and testimonies indicate that women's awareness have boosted negative behaviours from men that feel their rights as males challenged. This reveals that men have been left outside of communication strategies, mainly focusing on victims as target groups for messages and communication initiatives. This is a loose end of communication interventions developed until now.

All the studies analysed concerning Timor-Leste landscape look at factors responsible for high incidence of violence against women such as high rates of poverty and illiteracy, patriarchal society exacerbated by barlake (dowry) and violent recent past of the country. However, the social scientist Daniel Simião (2006) is the only analysed author that verified that for Timorese people moral violence is more aggressive than physical, which indicates a new behaviour perception: violence with an educational dimension. This different perception forces communication professionals to shift their communicational approach avoiding opposing messages to local perception and, by doing so, prevent resistance from communities to new concepts and values, such DV and women' rights.

This study demonstrates also that the introduction of the concept of DV and the global campaign 16 Days on Elimination of Violence Against Woman proves that lack of in-deep knowledge of the cultural and moral local context and no pre-testing communication material in order to verify their effectiveness bring

reverse results. Testimonies reveal that the message of this campaign, which was implemented in 2007, was not understood or misinterpreted by its audience. For this to be effective, it would be important to identify whom people trust the most in each community to become a partner in the programme. According to the survey conducted by UNMIT (2011), community leaders are the best sources of information, but they do not always disseminate information among their community members. Therefore, it is crucial to identify each local leader may be a change agent for disseminating information, mediating conflicts, and raising awareness, at the same time they maintain their traditional role. Only then the community leader (traditional or other) has the capability to engage community members around such a sensitive issue as DV and promote positive behaviours.

Another key agent is the younger, who produces behavioural changes over generations and may influence their peers and older generations. Better education and awareness make them both an audience and a vehicle of communication. Teachers may also have an influenced role through civic education and promoting dialogue within schools about violence at home and in their communities.

Overcome discrimination against women is about promotion of equality, respect for others, in particular, and human rights, in general. One study suggests that men, in general, and those responsible for violence and discrimination against women, in particular, are often forgotten in communication programmes. They cannot be outside for intended results in violence prevention. Another agent with an essential role in Timorese society is the Catholic Church. It can be an ally in communication programmes to counselling couples in non-violent conflict resolution and for the need of nurturing and safe relations between family and community members. Its influence in people awareness and education can shape beliefs that nurturing safe and positive behaviours will benefit all.

Choosing the right communication channels define the success of any communication strategy, as the right messages and audience. Normally, booklets, posters and flyers are the first to be thought. In Timor-Leste these are not the most efficient tools. This is confirmed in a survey conducted by UNMIT in 2010 (UNMIT, 2011), which also points media, police and community members as trusted information source.

In a country such as Timor-Leste where rural areas are isolated, mass media are having little impact. Word of mouth continues to be a good communication channel, which aggregated local and oral traditions it reveals to be effective. In this case, participatory theatre conveys simple messages using local culture and local languages, involving local community members into the subject by promoting reflection and discussion. Participatory theatre has the capability of engaging local communities with sensitive subjects than other than media. Radio community has a similar role and is an exception regarding mass media. It stimulates listeners to participate in the discussion about sensitive issues such as DV, besides getting information that normally they do not have access to and in their own language.

The power of media has not been totally used in Timor-Leste. For example, some spots for raising awareness were broadcasted in television and radio, but findings reveal lack of repetition, which make them less efficient. Habit and routine can then be a key factor in influencing behaviours.

If communication interventions have found constrains, it is also true that Timor-Leste has examples of effective communication activities resulting in increased awareness. Many implemented communication strategies are based on participatory principles: involvement of local communities for acceptance of new concepts and regulation through social mobilization; advocacy for enabling legal and regulatory environment, such as approval of the Law Against Domestic Violence (LADV) by decision-makers and referral network of support and service provision to victims; involvement of international and local agencies for gender equality policies and service provision.

6.1 Recommendations

The implementation of the National Action Plan on Gender-based Violence (NAGBV) is a major effort to reduce grassroots causes responsible for violent behaviours against women for enabling the environment for effective changes. However, this plan misses a national communication strategy to support and reach its goals. For now it only includes components of behaviour change

communication, leaving aside target groups that may promote collective changes, such as justice officials and service providers. Behaviour change communication strategies may stimulate individual action, but sustainable social change needs collective mobilization. A national integrated communication strategy may influence new perceptions of violence and generate positive behaviours. A positive social change should be visible with sustainable behaviour change, which both hard to achieve. They take time and effort from local agents and international partners.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is essential to verify how efficient is its implementation. M&E allow communication experts to find gaps, which can always be amended on time. Lessons learn are also important for future campaigns, such as public information campaigns. Measure and evaluate behavioural and social change is not an easy task, particularly at outcome and impact levels due to enablers (external influences) that facilitate or impeded the changes sought. These can be government policies or services and the campaigns and actions of other organizations. In this context, monitoring is to measure the indicators, assess the changes from the baseline data and report achieving result. Results-based monitoring ensures that the communication interventions contribute to the planned results by using the available resources.

7. Further research

It is suggested that men are been forgotten in communication programs, which may be responsible for raising violence against women. Communication strategies are mainly focus on women and victims, which may be responsible for a knowledge and awareness gap between men and women. This situation may constrain further behaviour change.

The possibility should be explored further communication programs focus on men by means of action research to determine its applicability. The applicability of such strategy should be under communication practitioner/specialist, who plays a role of the strategist in providing strategic communication program and the role of the technician in implementing communication activities.

Additionally, the implementation of the NAPGBV should be monitored and evaluated for further research of communication achievements, verify lessons learned and adapt new communication strategies for sustainable changes.

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