

CHES Communications Strategy

1. Importance of Communications:

Similar to most developing countries, in Cambodia, the general public is not sufficiently aware of the dangerous effects of child labor, or they accept them as unavoidable consequences of poverty. Many people are unaware of the problems of child labor in general, and more so of the children working in hazardous conditions. Making the most intolerable forms of child labor visible, showing their consequences, and indicating what can and should be done are the first steps to ensuring that the most abusive forms of child labor become socially unacceptable and thereby be eradicated. Once public opinion has been stimulated, it can play a significant role. For many people, hazardous conditions remain an abstraction, and actually seeing the conditions first hand provides a powerful impetus for effective change. Communications can do much to exhibit child labor in hazardous situations, and to mobilize public opinion and political and community support. Because of the extent of the problem and the danger of apathy, efforts must be sustained so that the public and the relevant authorities are constantly reminded of these unacceptable situations, and of the need to take immediate and effective action.

Given that child labor problems are ingrained in the socio-cultural and economic structure of society, the process to solve them effectively is complex and diverse. Therefore, CHES project, being implemented by Winrock International in Cambodia, aims at simultaneously facilitating both policy reforms and a change in attitudes within the country, among those directly concerned with the problem - children, parents and employers - and in society as a whole. These two aims are closely related. Extensive awareness raising and social mobilization lead to a shift in attitudes about child labor in society, which in turn creates public demand for policy reforms, and thus to changes in legislation, programs, budgets and institutional structures.

The process of communications is central to the achievement of the ultimate goal of eliminating the worst forms of child labor. All programs and activities to this end need to include communications strategies that make it possible to create or enhance awareness, mobilize the target groups, address notions and myths about the issue, clarify misconceptions and contribute to clear and precise knowledge of the issue. Although the problems and solutions are complex, the message has to be clear, precise and simple.

For that reason, the development of an effective communications plan to eliminate the worst forms of child labor (WFOCL) is essential to ensure coordinated and consistent information about adverse effect of the WFOCL. An effective communications plan will engender widespread understanding about hazards of the WFOCL and the importance of education for children.

In this regard, the following strategy has been determined by CHES after in-house consultations. It is also based on lessons that have been learned in projects implemented by Winrock around the globe.

2. Role of Communications Strategy:

The communications strategy provide a framework for communicating CHES project and its activities in Cambodia in order to and bring about greater awareness among working and non-working children, families, employers, local leaders, policy makers and other stakeholders.

The purpose of this strategy is to review the best possible communications methods and make recommendations on how these could be improved and provide an action plan to improve future communications.

This communications strategy has been developed by CHES for eliminating child labor in agriculture and to ensure coordinated and consistent information about use of children for work, in turn to stimulate widespread understanding and application throughout the sector.

3. Goals of the Communications Strategy:

- Making policy makers, general public and the children themselves aware of the issue of child labor;
- Persuading local and national authorities to develop alternative means of support for children working in the worst forms of child labor in agriculture, so that they can attend school;
- Educating children and their parents about how to protect themselves from labor and sexual exploitation;
- Helping shape ideas about child rights and child labor;
- Encouraging the general public not to use child labor – prevention and withdrawal;
- Developing branding for CHES communications materials in line with Winrock International and U.S. Department of Labor branding guidelines;
- Building rapport with print, electronic and alternative media against the WFOCL in agriculture for social change by publishing investigative reports and case studies of children working in agriculture without harming them; and
- Networking with partners and various organizations on child labor and education, e.g. Civil Society Network against Child Labor Organization (CSNACLO), Youth Council of Cambodia (YCC).

4. Key Elements of the Strategy:

a. Advocacy, lobbying and awareness raising

Sometimes it is assumed that advocacy is the main aim of communications. Yet, advocating for children's rights and against child labor is just one step on the way to changing a situation. Once ideas, attitudes and behaviors have changed, progress will have been made towards eliminating the worst forms of child labor, but much more remains to be done before children are able to stop exploitative, harmful work. Communications activities should not cease just because there is a general agreement that child labor must be abolished.

Information sharing at many different levels should be continued. There are many different understandings of the terms ‘advocacy’, ‘lobbying’ and ‘awareness raising’. All three, however, can be distinguished from practical interventions in people’s lives. All three relate to the need to develop an environment in which such interventions can take place successfully. And all three imply increasing people’s knowledge in order to change their attitudes as well as motivate them to change their behavior in some way.

To distinguish between these terms it is easiest to describe the activities they imply within child labor communications:

- **Advocacy**

Stimulating policy makers to act to change laws and/or implement them. Advocacy usually concentrates on particular issues, such as the ratification and implementation of an instrument such as ILO Convention 182, the expansion of compulsory primary education or improving inspection of workplaces to detect and eliminate child labor.

- **Lobbying**

So called because activities used to take place in the lobby (foyer or antechamber) of Parliaments. Lobbying targets legislators and focuses on pushing through laws and policies on specific child labor issues.

- **Awareness raising**

Providing general information about child labor, how it violates children’s rights, the harm it does to children and the fact that it can be prevented or eliminated.

5. Key Messages:

Communicating successfully about child labor means learning how to send messages of different kinds, through different channels, to different audiences and keeping track of the process.

The message is the most important part of the circular process of communications. But it is not neutral. We may develop an interesting and impactful message, and express it so that it catches people’s attention, but CHES and its partner organization will affect the message in ways that go beyond words. The way CHES is viewed is important – it affects the credibility of the message.

People often pay more attention to who says something than to what is said. If our organization is not known, or not credible, this will lead to our message not being trusted – and not being remembered. Therefore, we should take time to assess our own organization, its mission, its structure and the way it works.

Before CHES and its partners begin to give messages to the outside world it may be useful to make sure that the different parts of the organization communicate with each other. This may be as true for two people working in the same office as it is of a large organization with many sections and offices in different countries. Therefore, we should review our internal communications first – and make sure that everyone knows about the messages CHES wants to pass on to people outside.

Message Development

Winrock will have consultative meeting with partners to determine the appropriate annual message to be used consistently for CHES project. Similarly, partners will have consultative meeting with Child Youth Clubs, Child Labor Monitoring Committees and target children who benefit from CHES project about the proposed message. Winrock will also work with partners, government and other I/NGOs to observe annual theme of World Day Against Child Labor.

All target provinces of CHES project will use the same message throughout the year with different media tools. Message will be changed annually and will be evaluated to see the effectiveness of the message and tools.

a. Internal Communications

It is worth remembering that communications starts inside our organization. Any messages we deliver to the outside world need to be shared and agreed with our colleagues and partners, who need to be able to explain what these messages mean if people outside ask them questions. Thus, CHES needs to keep its colleagues and partners informed and involved. This needs to be systematic. CHES also needs to test from time to time that our messages are being read or listened to, and understood by our fellow workers. We should not forget that office support staff, cleaners and drivers have frequent contact with the public, including children. They too should know about our work and especially about children's rights.

b. External Communications

External communications and information sharing can include:

• Key organizational documents

Mission statement; annual reports, monitoring and evaluation reports; statements about how CHES is responding to international legislation on child labor – such as definitions of the worst forms of child labor and actions being taken against it in the country and by our organization, circulated to mass media, relevant government offices and other organizations.

• Advertising

Paid advertisements in newspapers or on radio and television, on billboards, posters and magazines.

• Publicity

Media coverage of project activities in newspapers, radios and televisions.

• Materials for other people and organizations to use

Fact sheets, press kits, briefings and conferences, photographs, case studies, videos, CD ROMs and cassettes.

• Publications

Regular bulletin or e-newsletter for supporters, which can also be enclosed with mailings and letters; brochure describing CHES mission, activities, successes and sources of funding; books and pamphlets about different forms of child labor.

- **Information centers**

For CHES and others to use – published and unpublished books and articles, surveys and research reports, which should be properly filed using a simple catalogue system. These are resources that we may overlook and almost certainly do not use to their full potential. Before we start looking for funding for expensive equipment for our communications we need to carry out a systematic listing and evaluation (“audit”) of the resources CHES or our partners already have close at hand.

6. Target Audiences:

a. Primary target group

- Policy makers
- Employers
- Parents of working children
- Working children

b. Secondary – allies, supporters

- Influential people
- Community leaders
- School going children
- Teachers
- Labor inspectors
- Local NGO/CBO

For a message to have maximum impact it needs to be tailored and channeled to a specific target group. For example, it is easier and more effective to group labor inspectors and government officials as one target group and parents and children as another. Even within the overall target group of government there are different important target groups, such as policy makers and legislators, bureaucrats, implementers and so on. There will, of course, be general messages that have a more general target group. Examples are advertisements aimed at the public on special occasions such as World Day Against Child Labor or Universal Children’s Day. Such general messages might only repeat a government’s commitment or policy, and thus might not be designed to change attitudes or inspire action on the part of any specific target group. Other campaigns for general audiences can be designed, however, to change societal views towards child labor.

The target groups can be both direct and indirect receivers of the message. The indirect message is important because in many cases it may be reinforcing a direct message. An example of an indirect message is an employer or a primary school teacher who reads a newspaper report (indirect) about a training session (direct) for labor inspectors.

An important target group for information campaigns is children; well-informed children are often their own best advocates. Children need information about the exploitative realities of child labor - especially children from areas and groups most likely to feed the child labor market. Most of them simply do not know what they are getting into when they first enter the labor market or how ignorant they are of the dangers they face. They need concrete information, put into a form and language they can understand, that will warn them of at least the main dangers they may well encounter in going to work. (A. Bequele and W. Myers: First things first in child labor (Geneva, ILO, 1995), p. 59)

7. The Main Channels of Communications:

There are four main channels (media) for sending our message:

- Person-to-person: Face-to-face communications, community meetings, home visits, group discussions;
- Community: Drama, music and songs, puppet shows, celebrations;
- Visual: Pamphlets, posters, displays in shops and other public places, videotapes, slides, flip charts, photographs and drawings;
- Mass media, which reach out to large audiences: Radio, television, newspapers, magazines, movies, billboards, the Internet.

We should aim to send our message through more than one channel so that:

- The maximum number of people receives the message;
 - Our message gets stronger, because people receive it from more than one source.
- Each channel of communications brings new challenges because we have to find new ways of getting the message across. The message remains the same, but how we say it is different. For example we might decide that our underlying message is "It is illegal and dangerous for children to work in agriculture and fresh water fishing."

Any message communicated from the sender to the receiver goes through one or more channels of communications. Some more traditional channels have been replaced by television, radio, newspapers, magazines and books. But the traditional channels, such as the family, story-telling, folklore and theatre are still effective for delivering the message. The family is a useful channel for passing on ideas, attitudes and beliefs. On many issues such as child labor, the ideas can flow in either direction: from the parents to the children or vice versa.

In addition, there are other channels which can reach large audiences. Among these are billboard displays, specialty items (T-shirts, pens, bags, etc.), rallies and marches. The Internet is another new channel reaching world audiences.

Channels that do not reach a large audience, but that are useful because of their specialized nature, are seminars, meetings and workshops which have a very specific message and audience. These include meetings on thematic issues, such as national policies and plans of action on the elimination of child labor and the role of teachers, educators and NGOs in eliminating the worst forms of child labor. They are also an effective channel for orienting and training specific target groups, such as labor inspectors, program implementers and so on.

Among the more innovative and more appealing channels are comic books depicting the plight of children caught in exploitative working situations and stories about working children.

8. Key Activities:

- Produce fact sheets about CHES activities in each of the four provinces (Prey Veng, Pursat, Siem Reap and Kampong Cham).
- Develop a Web site of CHES and Winrock operations in Cambodia.

- Compile media contact list for information, communications and action network.
- Networking and partners: ensure publication of CHES quarterly e-newsletter for its wider dissemination.
- Support nationwide dissemination of the research results of child labor in subsistence agriculture, tobacco and cassava for policy influencing.
- Develop and disseminate awareness material (posters, IEC materials) on child labor in subsistence agriculture.
- Organize child-led awareness campaigns to be taken up by the Child and Youth Clubs at the village level.
- Organize parent day in the school to raise awareness among teachers and parents on child labor.
- Organize World Day Against Child Labor each year on 12 June at all levels.
- Produce quarterly e-newsletter on project activities and child labor in agriculture (in Khmer and English) and its wider dissemination.
- Establishment of an information base on child labor in agriculture and development of a photo archive.
- Development of branding for CHES in line with Winrock International.
- Rapport building with print, electronic and alternative media and its mobilization against the worst forms of child labor in agriculture for social change by publishing investigative reports and case studies of children working in agriculture without harming the children.
- Regular meeting and networking with partners various networks on child labor and education e.g. Civil Society Network against Child Labor Organization (CSNACLO).

9. Key Results of Communications Strategy:

Children, families, employers, policy makers, general public and other stakeholders understand the regulatory environment for use of children in worst forms of labor, and work together to share information and take joint action against the worst forms of child labor in Cambodia.

10. Ethical Issues in Communications about Child Labor:

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) not only makes people think about children's participation it also points to the need to consider the ethical issues raised when working with children or on their behalf. This is particularly important in communications about children, because of the impact this can have on their lives.

The key ethical rule in communications about child labor is “Do no harm.” This means:

Protect children from any additional risks;

Respect children's dignity;

Ask children's permission to use their stories and pictures (not just the permission of adults, even if they are parents);

Respect children's decisions if they refuse to be interviewed or photographed;

Use the best possible information;

Do not use negative, degrading or stigmatizing images of children either in pictures or in words;

Do not identify individual children or groups of children unless they have given their permission and you can be sure that they will be protected from further exploitation;

Do not exaggerate, or use unnecessarily emotional language;

Do not make promises to children that you cannot keep;

Do not raise expectations you cannot fulfill.

Media, human rights activists, and development workers are all sometimes guilty of exploiting the histories of children in stories that emphasize their vulnerability, exaggerate their weaknesses and turn them into victims. Children do not like to be seen in the undignified role of victims. Like all other human beings they have the right to be asked how their experiences will be used in stories told about them. They and the adults who are responsible for them have to be asked for “informed consent.”

11. Excerpts from Management Procedure and Guidelines under U.S. Department of Labor for Communications

Effective communications is essential to the successful collaboration between USDOL and the Grantee Both parties are expected to keep the other fully informed of project-related issues.

The Grantee's primary point of contact with USDOL regarding technical matters is the Grant Officer's Technical Representative (GOTR) for the relevant Cooperative Agreement. Occasionally, there may be a different individual other than the GOTR responsible for oversight of the Cooperative Agreement. In such situations, USDOL will specify the Grantee's primary point of contact within USDOL.

11. a. Formal Communications

All formal communications will be with the Grantee's HQ in writing, by post, fax or email. Any correspondence or document sent in hard copy by mail to USDOL must be accompanied by a fax or email message alerting USDOL of its pending arrival.

11. b. Press Issues

The Grantee must inform USDOL to the extent possible of major press events and/or interviews. Any press release or press conference referring to a USDOL-funded project

must first be discussed and agreed to with USDOL and the appropriate U.S. Embassy. USDOL and the Grantee are expected to discuss general policy towards the press when it relates to 1) acknowledgement of USDOL funding, and 2) USDOL policy regarding international child labor. USDOL requests a minimum of two weeks to review draft press releases to be issued by the Grantee.

11. c. Guidelines for Acknowledgment of USDOL Funding and USDOL Disclaimer

The Grantee must acknowledge USDOL funding support in all publications, announcements, speeches and press releases relating to the projects. The acknowledgement must be as follows:

Funding for this (...) was provided by the United States Department of Labor under Cooperative Agreement number_____.

In addition, the Grantee is required to include a disclaimer in publications and materials that have been directly funded by USDOL as follows:

This (...) does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the United States Department of Labor, nor does the mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the United States Government.

This acknowledgment and disclaimer must be included in documents (reports and other materials) produced, edited and published for distribution beyond the Grantee and USDOL (i.e., to other donors, organizations, or the general public). At a minimum, the following USDOL-funded documents must include the acknowledgement and disclaimer:

Research and Data Collection

Survey reports

Rapid assessments and baseline survey reports

Research studies (economic, social, legislation, education, health, etc.)

Good practices report

Diagnostic reports

Manuals and Guidelines

Training manuals

Operational and Technical Guidelines

Awareness Raising Materials

Web site, Posters, Videos, CD-ROMS, Pamphlets

If there are any reasons preventing the Grantee from including the USDOL acknowledgment or disclaimer in the publications listed above, the Grantee must discuss the issue with USDOL prior to publication to obtain appropriate guidance on the matter.

The USDOL logo may be applied to USDOL-funded material prepared for worldwide distribution, including posters, videos, pamphlets, research documents, national survey reports, impact evaluations, best practices reports, and other publications of global interest.

A Grantee must consult with USDOL on whether the logo may be used on any such items prior to final draft or final presentation for distribution. A Grantee must obtain USDOL written permission before placing the USDOL logo on any item.

11. d. Communications with U.S. Embassies

The Grantee is expected to inform and invite the U.S. Embassy to all major events undertaken as part of the project and maintain good communications with Embassy staff. Any press release or press conference referring to a USDOL-funded project must first be discussed and agreed to with USDOL and the appropriate U.S. Embassy. The Grantee must not discuss project implementation problems with the Embassy without first informing USDOL. Depending on the nature of the problem, USDOL will then decide whether it will communicate directly with the Embassy on the issue, or allow the Grantee to inform the Embassy. The Grantee must also first consult with USDOL if it expects to be contacting the Embassy for assistance with customs and Value Added Tax (VAT) exemptions.

11. e. Follow-up Procedures for Problems and Allegations about the Project

The Grantee is expected to notify USDOL of any developments, problems, delays, or adverse conditions that may have a significant impact on a project, or which may materially impair the Grantee's ability to meet the project objectives. This shall include, subject to the requirements below, any information, suspicion or allegation relating to waste, fraud, or abuse of USDOL funds.

As soon as possible, and based on USDOL guidance, the Grantee must describe in writing any action taken, or contemplated to be taken, to resolve the situation, and a timeframe for doing so.

In cases where problems or allegations about the project are reported to the press, USDOL intends to consult the Grantee to determine the proper and most efficient manner in which to respond to news stories, and other media issues, affecting the project, and expects to work together with the Grantee, where appropriate, to resolve such matters.

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