



UNITED NATIONS
MALDIVES



COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 2022 - 2026



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Introduction

It's time for a reset. With the launch of the ambitious UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2022-2026) on 1 January, our communications need to be impactful to help deliver the transformative agenda to which we have committed. The United Nations Maldives Communications Strategy aims to bring about big positive changes with small, uncomplicated, and efficient steps.

The UN has bottlenecks and challenges in communication that we need to improve, ranging from use of complex language to insufficient outreach in the outer islands and atolls. When we held discussions with our partners and the people of Maldives in developing the new UNSDCF, some of the common impressions were that we only communicate to the government in Male, and international partners, rather than men, women and children across the country.

This Communications Strategy will focus on the local audience, and will reset our communications in a way that we:



14 LIFE BELOW WATER
13 CLIMATE ACTION
10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES
3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY
5 GENDER EQUALITY

Reach all Maldivians - in the appropriate language for them



Engage all Maldivians - with relatable content & using lively communications tools



Persuade all Maldivians - to take and advocate for necessary actions for the SDGs



Who we are and what we do

Maldives became a Member State of the United Nations in September 1965, shortly after gaining independence on 26 July of the same year. The UN Country Team in the Maldives comprises FAO, IFAD, ILO, IOM, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCAP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNODC, UNOPS, WHO, and the World Bank, based in Malé, Colombo, New Delhi and Bangkok.



The UN will support Maldives' achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through policy advice and technical capacity aligned to national development priorities outlined in the UNSDCF for Maldives, covering the period 2022 – 2026. The UNSDCF will serve as an accountability framework amongst the government, other partners and the UN, and is an integrated response with three major strategic priority areas, namely:

- 1- Shared Prosperity & Human Development for All
- 2- Sustainable & Climate Resilient Environment
- 3- Gender-Responsive Rights-based, Accountable Governance & Justice.



Objectives



We need to better engage the public

Messages are the essential foundation of our communications. They are what we want our audiences to understand and remember. However, messages alone are not enough. We need to ensure that through our communications, we are directly engaging with the people. To do this, we need to ensure that our communications are lively, up to date, in the right language (ie the most accessible), and delivered frequently and consistently. Further, to ensure we are engaging the public and to strengthen outreach in the future, we need to subject our efforts to monitoring and evaluation to ensure that we are using the most effective means and adjusting our strategies as our audiences change the way they receive information.

Inspire people to hope and care

Strategic communications are **communications with a purpose**. While we should communicate to inform, we should also communicate to make people care and to give them hope by supporting measures required to address the country challenges, ranging from climate action to gender equality. In this context we will take as our guide, the new approach defined in the UN's Global Communications Strategy 2020:

We must not just be messengers of disaster, but conveyors of hope.

Mobilize action

By inspiring people to hope and care, we must make sure our messages and communication strategies **persuade and encourage people to take action** wherever they can. This will contribute to speeding up Maldives' road to recovery from the pandemic, and the achievement of the SDGs. For example, leading people to participate in climate action, encouraging more women to be leaders in public and political sectors.





Our communications priorities

While the UNSDCF will support the achievement of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals, this Communications Strategy will focus on three main priority areas to ensure that clear, coherent, concise and consistent messaging engages our partners and the people of Maldives. The three priorities have been identified as key to the three Strategic Priority Areas of the Corporation Framework.



1- Young People

Young people are the future and are actively seeking to be part of our present conversations that impact them, and therefore ***should be the key audience and centre of all our communication efforts***. All analysis shows that they are both the largest and most excluded group from the economy, education, and employment, making them vulnerable to misinformation and harmful messaging, and missing in policy making and meaningful opportunities. The absence of a long-term development plan further reinforces this gap. We need to work with and for young people on improving the situation and opportunities for young people. We definitely need to talk to them in the right tone, language and using the right channels.

Key words to communicate: Our young men and women are our future; they are our way forward, they are the solution to our problems – from climate crisis to unemployment – and they are our future leaders. Our young people must identify and drive the change we need. National conversation; collaboration.



2- Climate Change

Small Island Developing States like Maldives are on the frontlines of climate change and feel the impacts first, and most severely. We are more vulnerable to unique challenges, ranging from sea-level rise to extreme weather patterns due to our small land mass and geographical isolation. These vulnerabilities threaten to reverse developmental progress. With our dependency on tourism revenue and food imports, we must step up our communications to persuade stakeholders and the people towards urgent climate action to increase resilience to future shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes more equitable and sustainable tourism for all Maldivians, as well as meaningful diversification of the economy.

Key words to communicate: It's not enough to talk the talk on the environment. If we're going to be taken seriously as a global champion in the fight against climate change, we need to walk the walk. These are our islands, our atolls, our oceans. This is our problem and only by coming together will we find our solutions. We can make a contribution in our daily lives, and lead as an innovator amongst countries. The UN Maldives will make your fight our fight. We are with you every step of the way. We're here to help – from adapting to climate change and taking better care of our fragile natural resources to safeguarding fish stocks and promoting biodiversity of our beautiful reefs.

3- Justice

People want a future where everyone, regardless of where they live in Maldives have access to equality and justice. However, institutional instability, limited accountability and weak capacities of the system has resulted in lack of public confidence in the transparency and fairness of the justice sector. At a time where significant reforms of the justice sector are ongoing, it is important that the UN focuses on our role in promoting peaceful, inclusive societies build strong, accountable institutions at all levels.

Key words to communicate: Right to justice; justice for all; fairness; equality; reliability; predictability; strong, independent institutions; transparency; accountability; rights and responsibilities; our social contract; we need to make justice more than a political slogan. We need to make justice a reality for all.



The 7 steps of strategic communications



1- Why communicate?

Deciding why to communicate on a given issue is a critical first step. Are we communicating to engage, reach and persuade all Maldivian residents? Defining a clear outcome is important as it will help us to achieve change.

2- Which audience?

Identifying our **target audiences** or who we are communicating with will help us to: develop clear, concise and consistent messaging tailored to resonate with every day challenges faced by people living in Maldives, design content that will get them to care, and select the most impactful mode of delivery.

The UN Maldives audience will include: the general public with a special focus on young people, government, local and international partners, the media, persons with disabilities and those left furthest behind.

3- What story?

To engage, reach and persuade people into action, we need to go beyond one-way information sharing and start a two-way conversation by conversing with people and capturing and telling stories in line with the most recent digital technology **human stories** will provide information on the problem, and the role of the UN in addressing the issue, but it will also inspire people to care and hope. It will not be the UN sharing anonymous and one-dimensional information. **We need to share our values and successes through the experience of individuals and communities** who can tell our story of lived reality with greater impact.



4- What action?

When we have inspired people to care and hope, **what are we asking them to do or act on?** We should offer people examples of people, communities, businesses, and countries overcoming global challenges and tell the people how they can make a difference in humanitarian and development efforts in the Maldives context.

5- What medium?

What communications tools will have the most **impact**, based on our different target audiences? We need to think of the mode platform? we deliver our messages through. Will a tweet, press release, statement, opinion editorial or face-to-face conversations be more useful in reaching out to people? Or can we convey the same core message in various formats for different audiences?



6- What distribution?

We also need to take into consideration **which platform we are using** to convey our messages by looking at current trends, studying our audiences, and establishing which partners can help push our messages further. We should think about the effectiveness of different platforms in reaching our target audience/s. Most importantly, we need to be creative on how to deliver our messages to the most vulnerable communities.

7- What impact?

We will develop annual communication plans with outcomes and indicators for results. We will regularly monitor and review the extent to which we are reaching our target audiences, if we are meaningfully engaging with work, and whether they are taking action on our work and the SDGs. We will be agile, and adapt and change our approach as our target audience/s change the way they receive information.



How we are changing

1- Enhancing our messages

An organization like the United Nations in the Maldives with an outward-facing mission for sustainable development requires **strong messages and direct engagement**. The UN Maldives will develop sets of **clear, coherent and concise, key messages**. Additional messages will be developed to enhance visibility and action on the 2030 Agenda as well as generally on the new UN reform in terms of “Who We Are & What We Do in Maldives”.

2- Strengthening use of social media

Social media is critical in reaching the resident population of Maldives, especially when such a large population percentage (47.1% as per the 2014 census), are young people between the ages 18 to 35. While we need to consolidate data on determining precisely which sections of the population use precisely which forms of social media, we will apply the general guidance detailed below, consistently across all UN Maldives communications:

- Practice the use of **simple, informal language** to engage younger audiences in English and Dhivehi

- Use a **conversational tone** rather than one-way messaging

- Encourage an exchange of ideas – it’s about **listening and sharing**

- Use **striking** visuals (i.e. pictures and short films)

- Use of up-to-date **animations and infographics** to limit heavy, complex text

- Enhance media relations and develop human interest **news stories**

- Always tailor global messages to the **Maldivian context** with pictures, Maldivian examples, use of data

- Regular monitoring of social media impact and analytics to check if our communications are working and make changes to increase our impact.

3- Ensuring inclusivity

In line with the UN Maldives Disability Inclusion Strategy 2020 – 2024, we will ensure that the majority of mainstream UN communications reflects persons with disabilities and are in line with minimum standards to **ensure disability inclusivity**.

To make our communications more impactful and inclusive, we need to change the English-focused communications the UN Maldives has traditionally used. UN Maldives will use **both English and Dhivehi when appropriate**. All social media communications will be made available to the public in both languages with Dhivehi prioritized when communicating specifically to our Maldivian audience. UN Maldives will continue to prioritize English in communications with the international audience and partners, and targeted languages for those resident in Maldives for which English and Dhivehi are not the primary language.

In addition to recalibrating language-use, we also need to rethink our tone and style. To ensure our messages are accessible to everyone in Maldives, we will aim to **deliver clearly and minimize complex language and jargon**. We will go back basics and remember the first three words of the UN Charter:

We the peoples... – and think about the people when we talk to them for them to understand and remember our messages.

We will further ensure that all our communications are in line with the principles of leaving no one behind and have a special focus on protecting and promoting the rights of all. A special focus will be given to achieve balanced representation of women and girls in all UN Maldives communications in line with our efforts to accelerate achievement of SDG5, Gender Equality.

Some examples of more inclusive language:

UN language (taken from our public information)	Try instead...
Cooperation Framework what does that mean for ordinary peoples, or for people outside the UN and international organisations?	Our plan OR Our focus OR Our commitment
Inter-sectoral coordination	Working together
Polarized modalities	Different ideas/opinions/ approaches
Accessing education	Going to school
Institutional capacity	What works
Overarching theory of change/rationale	Our goal OR What is the problem?

We will also design and deploy animated, Dhivehi-speaking character/s – one male and one female to become the **faces** and **voices** of UN Maldives and future campaigns, our mascots for the foreseeable future.



4- Building our relationships with media

We will consider who can help us get the message out. We will map and strengthen relationships with partners who can help to amplify our message. We will develop and maintain a list of international and local media interested in Maldives. We will host regular updates (6 times per year) with the press to brief them on UN work and have a regular accessible discussion. **We aim to be the go-to-source for comments** on anything that happens in the Maldives that impacts sustainable development.

5- Changing our approaches and experimenting

As a general rule of thumb, the more official communications look, the less they are likely to resonate with the people, especially those left furthest behind. **We are in the business of telling stories.** We will communicate to engage, inform, persuade and inspire our audiences. Because communications change all the time – we need to look out for new ideas and approaches. We will try to be as creative, dynamic, and interactive whenever, and wherever we can.

We need to bring the UN family in the Maldives together. That way each and every agency becomes a force-multiplier. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. **Each communications engagement from each agency should directly contribute to the agreed communications priorities.**

Some additional advice for UN Agency communications focal points:

• Think about hosting **take-overs of social media accounts** – it is fun, it will surprise people and it will raise your, as well as their, profile

• Think about your website. How necessary is it to have so much content? Have a look at how many people are using the site, regularly or otherwise, and ask yourself, does it justify the resources you put into it? The guiding principle should be: **is this useful for people out there?**

• Share your platforms with ordinary people – so that it's not just the usual suspects speaking to camera but ordinary people. **Give voice to the voiceless**

• Prepare a continually updated flow of events that people will want to attend – consider your technical activities and **how regular people can be involved**

• **Competitions for young people** – art, music, photography, poetry, essays on, say, climate change, justice, human rights etc

• Engage people who can influence action and experiment with new trending communications mediums (eg – Tiktok)

Are we getting it right?

We will continuously assess and evaluate the impact of UN Maldives media and public outreach and communications approach via the UN Communications Group (UNCG), enabling us to have a comprehensive view of progress towards achieving our objectives. We will also work to reduce silos and avoid duplication of communications efforts and reporting and bring a perspective to changes and improvements that need to be made. We will also review the standards, norms, and techniques we use for monitoring and evaluation in timely intervals.



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