

# Public Policy Communication



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# Importance of effective communication

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- Advancements in technology in modes of communication and the communication strategy to play a significant role in the success or failure of the policy.
- Well-intentioned policies have failed because of bad communication. Government communication has been overlooked and underused as a strategic tool for policy delivery
- A research in China found positive influence of prior consultation and policy training on policy understanding.
- The function of policy training is to improve objective policy understanding.



# Planning communicating

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- How effective is our government communication?
- What constitutes effective government communication? and
- What mechanisms does India have in place to ensure the effectiveness of its government communication?

# Communicating directly

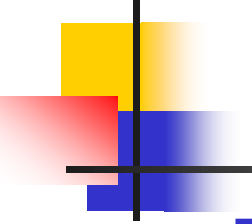


# Explaining Swachh Bharat's success



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- Until 2014, 600 million people were practicing open defecation across the country.
- Of these, 550 million were in rural India.
- SBM launched on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2014. The PM-CM-DM-VM connect was consciously created.
- The State governments were taken into confidence.
- The Secretary not “dictating” terms from Delhi but by travelling down to each State to interact intensively with the Chief Secretaries and the field functionaries.
- Visits not limited to the State headquarters but going down to the villages to understand ground realities that constituted very useful input in formulating policies.

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- A concrete value proposition in terms of benefits likely to accrue was conveyed to the stakeholders.
  - Workshops were organized at the national and regional levels that helped the field level functionaries.
  - The District Magistrates were incentivised through interactions in Delhi and other capacity building workshops.
  - Swachh Survekshan Grameen 2018 was constituted to provide healthy competition amongst the Districts.



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- Communication strategy was evolved to bring about behavioural change at the ground level.
- Supplemented with mass media at the national level.
- Well known personalities were roped in.
- The SBM foot soldiers and “Swachhagrahis” participated in triggering community behaviour change and sustaining it through inter-personal communication.



# Impact

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- A WHO study released in August 2018 reported that Swachh Bharat would have led to a saving of around 3,00,000 lives by 2019 and around 1,50,000 lives would be saved annually thereafter.
- The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation released a study in 2017 that showed significant improvements in diarrhea prevalence and stunting among children in ODF districts, compared to otherwise similar non-ODF districts.
- India was declared 100% ODF in rural areas on October 2, 2019.





# National Broadband Policy 2004

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- Target was to provide 20 million broadband by 2010 but achievement was only about 11 million.
- 104 service providers were providing broadband services.
- Actions were not aligned to policy intent.
- Speed remained miserably low.



# Elements of Good Communication

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- Inform

- explaining and supporting decisions;
- defending values and promoting responsible behaviours;
- facilitating dialogue between institutions and citizens.

- Persuade

- Building consensus around the policy
  - among people
  - among functionaries

- Engage

- instilling sense of ownership in the community
- helps in sustaining the consensus and avoiding confrontation throughout the policy cycle.

- Build institutional culture of transparency



# To make Persuasion feasible

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## THE LEADER SHOULD BE

- Leading by example
- Look committed
- Abiding by code of conduct
- Look incorruptible

# Core values of government communication



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- Democratic values demand transparency in the activities of the government.
- Take into consideration the opinion of all the stakeholders.
- Poor communication fosters distrust in government.
- Estonian government has identified certain core values
  - Openness
  - Responsibility
  - Neutrality
  - Respect
  - Innovativeness
  - Honesty
  - Comprehensibility
  - Justifiability
  - Cooperation



# Challenges

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- Government communication requires high level of professionalism and constant development.
- Many governments lack infrastructure needed for effective communication.
- The internet has loosened governments' historical and collective 'grip' on trust.
- Social media has created a sense that all information is 'free' and equal.
- While technology offers governments many more channels, the same technology has fractured audiences.



# Overcoming challenges

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- Last year in India, idea of embedding Indian Information Service officers with ministries was gaining ground in the government.
- Skill up-gradation and expanding the resource base is the key.



# Thorny issues

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- What will be function of PIB if most of its officers are attached to ministries?
- How neutral can an officer remain if embedded with a Ministry?
- Who will the officers report to, the Secretary or the Minister?
- What will happen to the Principal Director General PIB?
- Who will appraise these officers — DG PIB, as is the practice now, or the Secretary of the ministry they are attached to?



# Caveat

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- Need to ensure that the communication unit does not become a political propaganda mouthpiece.
- Not appropriate for a government agency to intervene in the political affairs of parties.

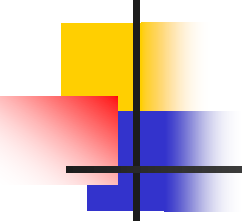




# Way ahead

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- Supporting government communication capacity as 'information development' may be a useful approach.
- There are two sides to information development:
  - First, a culture of disclosure needs to be created; and
  - second, governments need to have relevant information available.



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**Thank you**