

COMMUNICATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: BIODIVERSITY ACTION DAYS, THE CLIMATE CHANGE AND LAND DEGRADATION AGENDAS, FOCUSING ON THE NAMIBIAN BIODIVERSITY ACTION DAY AND PRESENTATION OF A GEO BIODIVERSITY MAGAZINE SUPPLEMENT

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Discussion contributions from the IUCN Commission on Education and Communication (CEC) represented by Juliane Zeidler, Chair

The CEC is a network of over 1,100 experts in specialty areas such as environmental education, capacity development, change management, strategic communications, and marketing psychology – to name just a few. It is one of six Commissions of the IUCN.

The strategic planning of communication for sustainable development is a great approach – and the examples presented here today are very positive models of communication best practice. Well targeted, planned and executed, building on synergies amongst key issues on BD, LD and CC. I want to congratulate the team for this excellent work!

Further underpinning this work, I would like to stimulate a bit of thought – highlighting some of the approaches underlying the great work presented today.

Since 1992 there has been more embedding of policies and processes to support sustainable development. In selected place remarkable strides towards this agenda have been made – BUT the pace of change in most of the world has been too slow

We are working against a powerful vision in the public eye – which is one of luxury living and unbridled consumption, and a mantra of economic growth.

How do we instead project and communicate a powerful and compelling vision of a future we want - based on sustaining nature's ability to support all life on earth while addressing the needs of the poor?

A vision of doom does not fit with what psychology shows motivates us nor is a vision of denial....

People are happiness seekers – so connecting with People's desire for happiness triggers positive change qualities like creativity, cooperation and openness to change. Consequently we need to appeal to these positive emotions when working on changing behaviour and engaging People in a new vision.

Psychology research tells us **People are natural imitators**. People change their behaviour to blend with their environment and peers. Thus we need to play into the idea of what is normal and make visible sustainable behaviours of individuals and organizations.

We can work with the findings from psychology that indicate **People want to be good (most)**. They want to protect innocent others, and they want to be fair to others. These moral behaviours are very powerful. So our biodiversity and sustainable development issues need to be framed as social justice.

We need to encourage the expectation that **People be responsible and live up to their values**, be they politicians, business operatives, farmers or city dwellers – here or anywhere in the World.

There is a wealth of knowledge about **the one** aspect of biodiversity we worry much about – People! Stemming from psychology, consumer research, marketing, and other.

Yet, trying to address sustainable development – BD, LD and CC - challenges, we usually don't invest much into surveying and understanding how different People in our countries view these issues, how they uptake information and what motivates them for action and decision making. If we would invest more into these areas, like undertaking market surveys, we could develop better strategies to leverage public participation and action. Targeted communication programs that can correct what is misunderstood and explain the consequences of actions can be designed. Look at what big companies invest into their marketing research budgets! And why! Investing in understanding how to engage and bring about change in the cultural context of a country is vitally important work to be undertaken.

The work that is presented tonight understands these concepts very well! It is now up to us - – the sustainable development practitioners to understand and apply the underlying science for our daily work!

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