

MOLDOVA
Social Investment Fund II

Communication Strategy

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1. Introduction

“Don’t just tell them, don’t just show them, do it with them”.

This could almost be the philosophy of MSIF I and how it has worked with different disadvantaged rural communities in Moldova since 1997. With a good communication strategy you do not want to tell people, or show people, but help them to change their behaviour. Our wish is that this will be the way this draft Communication Strategy will be built upon and become the property of not just MSIF staff, but also its partners.

This draft Communication Strategy has been designed to complement the Project Concept Document prepared by the team of Anush Bezhanyan. As there is still a great deal of work to be done in building up the final project design and operation manuals, it is necessary for this document to be seen as providing a framework into which the different objectives of the overall project and the main components can be entered.

It is important that as this Communication Strategy is developed it is discussed and adapted with the project’s partners. This will be necessary to keep MSIF staff and partners focussed on the main priorities for them and their communities.

Overall the results of the Communication Strategy Workshop were that the participants realised that there has been a great deal of progress made in developing communications during MSIF I, but that there are many new areas foreseen in MSIF II which need new approaches for new target groups. As the new tasks are prepared the concept of keeping close to the beneficiary communities and disadvantaged groups will help to keep the communication effective and truly participatory.

Historically MSIF I was an agency offering to work closely with communities in rural areas who had always felt forgotten and neglected. Initially these communities were suspicious and had to be convinced about the intentions of these “do-gooders” from Chisinau with money from the World Bank. They were also unsure about the need to gather contributions among poor villagers to help pay for future maintenance.

All of this initial communication tended to be TOP – DOWN, one way communication. MSIF was proactive in trying to gain potential beneficiaries among the rural population. After one or two years the trust started to develop as people saw what was possible and began to change their attitudes. The communication became more reactive as MSIF responded to the needs of its partner communities. The communication now became two way, with MSIF listening to the issues and reacting to them.

Within a short space of time the main spokespeople for MSIF became the recipients of the initial grants to implement the microprojects. This did not happen overnight, as there were many general meetings, seminars, conferences and study visits to organise to show people what was possible when they joined together to solve particular problems affecting their community.

A number key target groups have already become active communication partners of MSIF and numerous tools are already being used. Among the most successful have been the 13 TV programmes which have been produced by Studio Socium Moldova on behalf of MSIF. These show the work carried out by the communities to solve their problems, how they have carried out fundraising and work and how their attitudes of passive bystanders has changed to one of active

doers. In addition the Alternative Rurale newspaper funded by the UK's DFID has been a valuable source of information of the achievements of communities. The recent establishment of 17 Community Information Centres has the potential to create a real outreach and consultancy role within a hub system serving around 12 to 20 villages. This should build upon the curiosity of the villagers to developments in neighbouring villages and the pride of the beneficiaries in their achievements. This will also be speeded up by the three networks of beneficiary associations which have been established. With their capacity being developed all the time, the most advanced villages are now starting to access other funding sources to carry out works which are providing real benefits to the social and sometimes economic prospects of their communities.

This draft Communication Strategy will begin by looking at the overall Objectives of MSIF 2 and then examining methods which might be applicable to each Component and the different target groups. This takes into account the social, historical, geographical and political context of the rural areas in Moldova, the experience with MSIF I and the great resources of commitment, enthusiasm and belief among the staff and partners of MSIF. There are obvious problems with certain institutions and individuals who have not experienced the difference achieved by MSIF I and who perceive MSIF as a threat or as competition.

As a way of concentrating on the achievements of MSIF these are some of the Key phrases which have been used at the Communication Strategy Workshop and elsewhere.

TRUST
HOPE
POSITIVE
SELF CONFIDENCE
COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT
NEW ENTHUSIASM
NETWORK
PARTNER CENTRED APPROACH
TWO WAY DIALOGUE
QUALITY
DURABILITY
CREDIBILITY
TAKING DECISIONS
PARTNERSHIP
DELEGATE RESPONSIBILITY

2. Thinking behind draft Communication Strategy

“I’ve got a big mouth and a loud voice, is that enough?”

2.1 Effective Communication

The answer to the question above is obviously no. Effective communication needs first of all to have big eyes and big ears. We have to continue to be proactive with the new concepts being introduced in MSIF II, but very quickly to be reactive as experience is gained and new issues are raised.

Our overall starting point has been from the Project Concept Document to look at empowerment and “providing the poorest part of the population with voice and choice.” Therefore our aim will be empowerment. See table below

Speak on behalf of the voiceless	Representation
Encouraging them to speak to you	Mobilisation
Let them speak for themselves	Empowerment

2.2 The differences from MSIF I

As indicated in the Project Concept Document there are many lessons which have been learned during MSIF I. Much of the work at village level and with Beneficiaries Networks will continue with new targets developed with the communities. There are however a number of new initiatives which will be launched under MSIF II and these will need a new approach.

2.3 Changing behaviour

With any Communication Strategy it is useful to have a good starting point. As we stated earlier we do not just want to inform during MSIF II we want to help change behaviour. This could be summarised as follows:

What do you want to change

Who will make the change

How will you make the change

When will you make the change

2.4 Objectives

As our Communication Strategy is designed to support the activities of MSIF II, it is vital that our objectives are the same as those of the organisation. In quite a long winded way this Project Development Objective is described as *“Contribute to the implementation of Moldova’s Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy by empowering poor communities and vulnerable groups to manage their priority development needs through: i) improved delivery and quality of basic social and economic services; and ii) development of the capacity of their institutions and strengthening social capital.”*

If we try to use that description with the public involved in existing microprojects they would not understand what we are trying to communicate. We therefore have to bear in mind the lessons from MSIF I about keeping our language in easy to understand phrases and avoid technical, managerial and sociological jargon.

Our approach must be to continue to identify how change has taken place as a result of the activities of MSIF and the beneficiaries/partners. We need to share that information with the targeted groups who will benefit from it. We need to find ways of keeping the message easy to understand and to find the people who can show, explain and hopefully repeat the experience with the target group.

2.5 Guiding principles

In order for the Communication Strategy to be successful it has to be planned and carried out by looking at each component, each sub-component, the effects with certain communities and who to spread the message to and in which geographical location. Each time the following six principles will guide us.

1. What is our objective?
2. Which audiences need to be reached?
3. What changes in behaviour are required ?
4. What messages could be appropriate?
5. Which channels of communication would be most effective?
6. How will the communication process be monitored and evaluated?

In all cases experience with MSIF I has shown us that our communication needs to be as practical and accessible as possible.

Please follow the grid in Annex 1 to start to make the Communication Strategy come alive.

2.6 Get the audience's attention

In order for communication to be successful it has to capture the attention of the intended audience. They have to be interested because it is something which affects them, their lives, their activities. We also have to try new methods of attracting attention which are available to our intended audience. Whenever we can we need to give practical examples and to show how people have changed in order to create success stories. We do not want to say that everything is now perfect as a result of MSIF, but we want to be able to show how the process of empowerment has multiplied amongst our partners and those who come into contact with them.

3. Component 1: Community Development

“We have been able to achieve something, by working together.”

3.1 Working in villages

The reaction above is typical of the 400+ microprojects introduced during MSIF I. Many have taken place in villages which are remote, away from the capital city, away from regional centres of power and in many cases places where the basic infrastructure has just been neglected for a number of years. Places where hope was in short supply and where there was little trust in the government or those in authority.

In MSIF II the system of rural microprojects will be built upon, with a debate now going on within MSIF of whether communities who have already had MSIF grants should receive further assistance or whether only new villages should be targeted. One idea which could be explored further might be to insist that existing Beneficiary Associations should provide practical assistance to new communities, before they can benefit from further MSIF help. The purpose in all of this should be to provide incentives for self help rather than create barriers between the MSIF villages and the others.

3.2 Target Groups

With the village microprojects there is a great potential to build upon what has already been achieved, by MSIF centrally, but more importantly by the villages themselves.

Participants in the Communication Strategy Workshop identified the following target groups:

- Local Administration
- Civil Society
- Implementing Agencies
- Inspectors/Consultants
- Contractors
- Businesses
- Schools
- Church
- Social Institutions
- Community Based Organisations
- Central Government
- Other donors
- NGO's

3.3 Project Objectives

For each of the target groups there is a need to identify the project objective, which will normally coincide with the communication objective.

Some examples included:

How Mayors/Primars can take decisions on community development with their committees
How transparency can be introduced to local administrations

How to improve self confidence in Civil Society
How to encourage sustainability
How to build up effective partnerships

Contractors – improve laws, improved quality standards
Local administration – remove administrative barriers

How to have a more flexible approach to solve problems

3.4 How this will be done

The next question to be addressed for each objective is how this will be done. It may not be enough to have just one way of achieving the objective and we may need to look at using a number of tools in our toolbox. Those identified include:

Discussions
Seminars
Letters
Fax
E-mail
Internet Pages
Meetings
Conferences
Training
Local study visits
Information Centres
Mass Media

For each of these communication channels we need to have a different approach. For some of these methods we will have to carry out the work, in other cases it will be intermediaries who will do this. Each time we have to ensure that practical people with practical messages are involved. Judging by the results in MSIF I, that should be possible, but we must keep reminding ourselves of this.

3.5 Working to a deadline

All of this must be achieved by certain deadlines so that we can get the information to the intended audience at the correct time. Doing a speedy job does not mean that we can afford

inaccuracies. As with everything MSIF does, a spirit of transparency and honesty is vital within all communication activities.

At the end of the process we need to evaluate how well that communication objective was reached, what effect it had on the different target audiences, what was their reaction, what changes have now started to take place?

3.6 Ensuring sustainability

With the microprojects at village level there is a feeling that some great work is taking place with the network of beneficiaries associations, but that that has to be built upon and further supported.

Encouragement will be needed to keep the population of the village involved so that sustainability can be ensured. New information is needed with noticeboards, newsletters etc. When village strategic plans are being formulated, a lot of effort is needed to make sure that all of the affected actors are able to make their contribution.

This work has also shown a need to improve the skills of some departments in the local administration. It is this which could become even more important as the work expands to include small towns during MSIF II.

3.7 Work in small towns

On paper it may be assumed that many of the problems associated with microprojects in villages will also apply to small towns. Discussion at the Communication Strategy workshop however indicated that there are many more different groups who need to be convinced when activity is scaled up to deal with small towns.

It was agreed that there is a need to work with microdistricts of the towns. There will be a diversity of problems in the towns and it may be difficult to get agreement of the whole town to tackle one issue. It was agreed that the concerns of the population need to be addressed and that it will be difficult to convince people to make contributions until they can clearly understand their role and how they will benefit.

3.8 Involving local businesses

One factor which is more obvious in small towns is the opportunity to involve local businesses. Being based in the local community they will often be able to see both social and economic benefits of certain types of microprojects. Care has to be taken to make sure the businesses do not dominate the decision making process, but that their contribution is valued alongside the other participants.

3.9 Convincing residents of small towns about MSIF

As the whole concept of carrying out microprojects in small towns is new for Moldova, there will have to be ways of showing and convincing the population how MSIF is a reliable partner and how they have to carry out their own planning, organising and fund raising. There is a real

role of building up self confidence, by involving the motivated sections of the community in the process.

3.10 Strategic plans for small towns

Mention was made of how important a strategic plan will be for small towns. One concern might be that this should not delay the implementation of the first microprojects, as it will be very important to show examples of MSIF success in small towns at the earliest opportunity. Many of the lessons learned from Community Driven Development can be applied to the small towns and there should be negotiations and discussions between different neighbourhoods in the town.

3.11 Capacity building of MSIF partners

The final sub-component of Community Development is looking at capacity building of MSIF partners. Much of this work is dependent upon effective training. This training needs to be attractive for the targeted groups (community based organisations, local administrations, contractors, local consultants etc). It maybe that certain communication tools can assist with this training, so that it is more participatory and practical. Suggestions can include use of case studies and exercises in solving problems. It could also be that some of the excellent TV programmes could be repackaged as training material so that real examples can be used to start discussions among the trainees.

3.12 Two warnings

Overall, the Community Development component might be seen as the one where MSIF has gained the most experience. There are two warnings however, we should not be complacent about how to work in villages and we need to help the villages even more to carry out their own communication. The other warning is that a great deal of effort will have to go into the small town sub component in order for there to be a repeat of the successes at village level.

4. Component 2 Social Care Services Development

“We think we know what to do for these vulnerable groups, but there’s never enough money or enough time.”

4.1 Changing attitudes

That could be a statement from a Social Care Worker in any country in the world. The sector is never the number one priority of any government’s budget. In many cases it is here more than elsewhere in the MSIF activities that a real change of attitude is necessary in order for there to be new opportunities for these disadvantaged groups and those who care for them.

4.2 Three pilot rayons

When there are so many vulnerable groups, so many problems to be overcome the reaction of those involved in social care can be one of despair. They continually ask “how can I make a difference?”

It is in this sector that MSIF II will have to help those involved to see how they can make a difference, especially in the three pilot rayons which will be chosen.

4.3 Building on MSIF I

Again we can build upon the experience of MSIF I which looked at social development, children at risk and children with disabilities. With 24 centres it could be described as the start of a model of community services.

What is planned for MSIF 2 is a huge expansion of this piloting process with new services targeted at youth, old people, abused women etc.

Already there is an understanding that there should be priorities with sub plans about how social community services can be provided. We need to promote reform and have a strategy on how to change the social care services in these pilot rayons.

Certain changes will also need to have support at national level especially legal and fiscal. The principle of the money following the client has to work in practice.

4.4 Target groups

The Communication Strategy workshop identified the following target groups

In the Community

Population, families, local administration, local NGO’s, local businesses, schools and kindergartens, social care assistance – service providers

At Rayon level

Education department, Legal department, Health and Hospitals, Social Care Service, Department of Labour, Civil Registration, NGO's and mass media
District Council, Commerseriat (Juvenile Offenders) Office

National

Ministries of Finance, Education, Labour and Social Protection, External (trafficking of people)
Donor organisations, technical assistance,
National Council for Protection of the rights of the Child
NGO Network – Social Care
Mass Media
Pensioners Alliance
Woman and Child
Educational Institutions
Social Care Department
Training Social Workers

4.5 Change behaviour

There is a need to change behaviour. This can be seen at village level with changes needed for the disadvantaged groups to realise they can achieve results themselves, for more tolerant attitudes and for this to result in changed behaviour towards the disadvantaged.

With the local administration they often regard this sector as being the responsibility of the National Government. The local administration should help to identify the priority problems of vulnerable groups. They should also give financial support.

With the direct beneficiaries there is a need for direct involvement. They can improve their own skills and change attitudes to help solve their own problems. Sometimes the beneficiaries can influence the rest of the family.

With parliament, we could work with MP's and special commission members.

With families there is a need to include the extended family. How to stop parents from giving up their responsibilities to children when they go to boarding schools/orphanages. Need to encourage better conditions in the family home than at boarding school. The other issue is what to do when parents are abroad, totally abandoning the children.

Will it be possible to work with vulnerable families to help them solve problems, to train the parents to treat their children better?

4.6 High quality services

At Village level the main work will be carried out with local NGO's with an emphasis on high quality services. There will be a need to obtain financial resources and to raise awareness.

It is suggested that businesses should be encouraged to take part in philanthropic activities.

There should be an inclusive environment. Within schools there is a need to have programmes for individual needs and for children with disabilities.

4.7 A new model

It is foreseen that the new model of social care services will have

- a) involvement of the disadvantaged
- b) local administration
- c) businesses
- d) other financial sources

These could be set up by NGO's or in some cases by the church.

4.8 Changes at rayon level

At Rayon level there is a need to identify the beneficiaries and to work with Education and Health Departments. The aim should be to deliver higher quality services.

Labour Offices should look at families at risk and the links with unemployment.

With Civil Registration, they should give documents for disadvantaged groups. Some people have not got birth certificates, they should have these and have passports without charge.

4.9 Changes with the ministries

With the ministries we have to encourage them to support the new strategies in the pilot areas. The principle of "the money follows the client" should be allowed.

There should be a national strategy for child and family protection.

4.10 Where are the social workers?

The issue of recruitment and quality of services in the social care sector should be looked at. There are very few social work specialists. The salaries are low and very few jobs available in social work.

Although there ought to be, there is nobody employed at the Mayor's office to carry out social assistance work. They could hire people from the local budget, but as we mentioned earlier this is not a priority.

According to the law mistreated children should be looked after, but there are no staff to do this work.

Work needs to be done with the educational sector to train and motivate social workers. They need to gain experience and perhaps other skilled professionals could retrain for this work.

4.11 Getting the story right

The mass media can be shown the pilot projects and they could help change attitudes among different groups. There is little understanding in the mass media about social protection, they only cover one or two sensational cases.

It is suggested that some briefing and capacity building work is carried out with journalists.

4.12 Sharing experience

With the donor organisations we need to share experience once the pilots have started. This needs to be developed into a strategy and different models used to show what is possible. When new ideas work people become very keen on them.

4.13 Showing change

Within the social care sector it is possible to show how people have solved problems themselves, thus pushing those at the top to change. These changes can be shown by using village to village study visits, using the network of beneficiary associations and organising workshops based at the Community Information Centres.

4.14 Practical communication

When work is carried out on planning the communication activities associated with the Social Care Services Component it will be very important to build upon small parts of the pilot activities. Each time there will be different messages for the different target groups. The practical ways of assisting the different groups and of encouraging care within the community will need to be shown and explained. Only when the different activities are running successfully will it be possible to carry out a broader communication of the pilot areas to the decision makers.

5. Component 3 Capacity Building, Monitoring and Evaluation

“But we need to communicate it as well”

5.1 Best practice

The communication aspects of Component 3 will be vital if this is going to be able to change attitudes among the different target groups involved with shaping policy. Within the different sub components there are again new tasks which must be included in MSIF II which did not appear in MSIF I.

It seems clear that there is a need to provide a step by step guide to what has been achieved by different microprojects and interventions by MSIF, to analyse these, show why they worked and encourage others to make it work in other places. It is believed that this was already taking place in a less formal way, but for effective dissemination we may need to produce training modules for different groups (potential project partners, local administration, contractors, NGO's etc).

5.2 Collecting information

With sub component 3.1 it is important to make sure there is a good record of what has been achieved within the microproject, being put forward as a model of best practice. Photographs, video material, articles from newspapers, records of meetings can all contribute to creating a picture of what has been achieved in the planning and implementation of the project. In addition as much of the success of MSIF has been based on community participation in the maintenance, the lessons of sustainability should also be featured. It is the job of the specialists involved and the Promotion and Community Development team to gather and package the information for the different target groups. Then the task is how to deliver the findings to people who will be interested in replicating the MSIF and community experience.

5.3 Targets

The people who should be targeted for these activities include:

National Council of MSIF

Ministries

Mayors

Civil society

Other projects

Donors

Government institutions

Some of the key issues which need to be included are :

How the communities have got a new attitude towards the process of change – can this happen with ministries as it has started to happen with some local administrations?

Transparency

How the communities have the responsibility for the success of MSIF microprojects

5.4 Methods

The tools which have been discussed include:

Round tables

Working groups
Seminars
Practical results
Reports and exchange of experience (Guidebooks)
Permanent exchange of information – with other donors, NGO's

5.5 Local target groups

There is a crossover between some of the activities suggested in sub component 3.1 and 3.2, but the main difference might be in the different target audiences. With 3.1 perhaps it should be more directly targeted at the opinion formers in local and national government, donors and national NGO's. Within 3.2 the communication can take place at a local level and perhaps much better use can be made of the Community Information Centres which have been established under MSIF I.

The potential target groups are therefore government institutions, the association of beneficiaries and other partners in the community. It seems obvious that we need to continue to show potential partners about best practice by encouraging the existing partners to show how it is done. This is a real two way exchange of communication with the demand coming from the potential partners. Some assistance might be given by MSIF facilitators to produce small leaflets or handout sheets with some of the key points for consideration – the lessons learned.

5.6 Using the media

It is important that initiatives such as the Alternative Rurale newspaper and the television programmes at regional level are continued and refreshed. In addition other activities with selected sections of the media should be encouraged. Whenever there is an impact from work carried out by MSIF partners we should be looking to see how that can be featured on local, regional, national or specialist media.

5.7 Monitoring and evaluation

For sub component 3.3 on monitoring and evaluation it would be best to carry out most of the work through the Association of beneficiaries. There would need for extra training to improve self evaluation and participatory monitoring.

Work could also be carried out with the local administration, so they could learn more about evaluating projects and especially about transparency.

At local level there is a need to improve the skills and monitoring capacities of the communities. Local inspectors/consultants could also get involved in the monitoring.

Some more sharing of information needs to happen especially the ministry blacklists of firms who have not been paying taxes.

Overall we need to encourage more professionalism with extra brochures and guidebooks on how to work with MSIF.

5.8 Gaining a supportive voice from the ministries

During the Communication Strategy Workshop there was much discussion on how to influence people in the ministries to become vocal supporters of MSIF.

There was agreement that understanding their motivation was important. For many they have a problem with MSIF in that it is part of the Government, but away from the Ministries and they feel they have no control over MSIF.

The big task facing MSIF is to convince people in the ministry that we are not in competition but are a partner.

It was agreed that we should take part in working groups, contribute to action plans and try to show how MSIF can help them find solutions to problems. We have to stress how our strategy is flexibility, being able to react to our partner communities.

We are able to work with implementation agencies in a new way with people involved at local level.

The wastage caused by low quality standards and lack of transparency within certain ministries has to be compared to the insistence on quality by both the communities and MSIF.

The suggestions are that MSIF should try to influence certain high level people with examples of what is being achieved and where changes in legislation could make a difference on behalf of people in the country. We need to show that the demand is coming from the people.

5.9 Community Information Centres

The following points were made for the Community Information Centres which exist in 17 villages.

- They should be a permanent location, well equipped
- The staff should be well trained
- They should collect information from donors, NGO's and community networks
- Should collaborate closely with other neighbouring villages who they should be serving – not just in their rayon, but others nearby
- They should use local radio, produce news letters. This helps with information flow and gives transparency. It would be useful for the local administration, community feedback
- Regional mass media – pass information to others
- There should be useful information at the centre. Should use noticeboards in their village and the other 12 – 20 that they serve
- Organise working conferences with social associations, every 3 or 6 months
- Exhibitions, best practice competitions, exchange of information
- Leaflets on FISM, Donors, other useful information
- With the network of beneficiary associations carry out participatory evaluation of each centre
- Collaborate with community players, local administration etc
- Consulting in different areas, should be a facilitator on subjects like donors, marketing and internet

Use wide experience needed in villages, help with information about agriculture, employment opportunities etc
The fund could show its procedures at the information centres

It seems that the centres are appreciated, quite well equipped, but at the moment under-utilised. These are potentially a tremendous asset to create information at community level and to include villages which have not yet benefited from MSIF microprojects.

Equipment in a room can be appreciated by people who feel qualified enough to use it, but there is a huge difference between this and providing a fully functioning, dynamic community information and resource centre. As with all of MSIF activity the sustainability and enthusiasm for the centre needs to be looked at carefully. It is also crucial that people in the 12 – 20 villages neighbouring the centre are aware of its presence and the services it can offer. One idea though might be whether the staff of the centre should be waiting all the time for people to contact them and whether they should not be more proactive in marketing the services which the centre can provide.

Access to the centre seems to be the biggest problem for people from neighbouring villages. Perhaps in one of the pilot rayons an information centre could be equipped with a minibus. This could be used for the staff of the centre to visit each village once per month and then show display boards and a sample of what the centre has to offer. In addition the minibus could be used to collect people from outlying villages to bring them to activities such as training or counselling taking place at the centre.

The information centres also have a TV and video player. With the correct selection of existing video material, together with back up material, this could be a useful resource for informing people about what has been achieved with other MSIF microprojects. One further point on this is that by training one or two local staff or NGO staff to use digital video cameras, with tripods and microphones and then how to produce training programmes by doing the editing on computer, it could be a way of allowing the people to show what they have achieved in a way which would increase even further the participation. The capital cost of a digital camera kit and the editing software would be less than \$2,000.

Each centre also has a computer with internet connection. A list of useful sites should be made available and users encouraged to log on to obtain information which could be relevant to their communities.

6. Priorities

“Just do it”

6.1 Delegation

Obviously we cannot do all of the activities suggested in this draft communication strategy all at once. What we can do though is to delegate as much as possible so that in many of the communities where MSIF has carried out microprojects communication activities are taking place.

As with many aspects of work within MSIF it is important to decide on priorities and to make a flexible work plan with achievable goals.

6.2 The first list

At the Communication Strategy workshop the following were identified as priorities:

- Information Centres
- Motivation of Ministries
- Develop different strategies for different components
- Involvement of MSIF 2 in National Action Plans
- Determine our role in different Ministries
- Involve Local Administration and Community Leaders in villages and small towns
- In the small towns work with businesses
- Look at legal changes especially for social care
- Efficient strategy for each subject
- Define audiences (target groups) clearly

6.3 Discuss and amend

The best way forward is now to discuss this document with different partners and to amend it as new priorities appear for MSIF II. At a practical level the different communication objectives should then be examined and a step by step guide to implementing these activities should be built up.

What has been achieved by MSIF and the partner communities so far is truly impressive, we now need to build on this to impact at both local and national level.
Good luck and enjoy the work.

7. Action Plan

“Lights, Camera, Action”

7.1 Communication Messages match the action in the field

With MSIF it is not too difficult to find examples of how project activities have led, not just, to disbursement of funds, but to enthusiastic demonstrations of how communities have taken up the challenges to implement microprojects. As an organisation MSIF is truly “action-orientated”. It is very important therefore that the communication activities reflect this.

There will obviously be a number of activities planned between now and the start of the MSIF II, but there needs to be careful thought given to how messages can be given until the start of MSIF II, scheduled for September 2004. We need to know from the World Bank and the National Board when we can make a public announcement about the start date and the hopes for MSIF II. Preparation has to go on for the content of leaflets, press releases, articles in *Alternative Rurale*, contents of training sessions for partners, members of the network of beneficiary associations and the staff of Community Information Centres.

7.2 Refine the strategy

One of the best uses of time until the official start of MSIF II will be to refine the communication strategy, with both colleagues and the forward thinking communities and their networks.

For each component and sub component we should draw up a number of activities and include them in the table included in Annex 1.

7.3 Identify the target group and work with them

MSIF II contains a mixture of similar activities and new areas of work. It is therefore important to decide upon the messages that need to be communicated with different target groups. In addition we need to think how the communication process can help colleagues who are starting activities with new groups and in new areas of operation.

The starting point in each case will be to identify the target audience and understand who they will best respond to. What is the behaviour that we would like to change. What is our simple message and the further information needed. Then how do we reach the target group (what channel of communication). Finally we need to ask ourselves how we make sure the communication has been effective.

7.4 Action plan

A 3 – 6 month action (activity) plan should now be drawn up with realistic deadlines and indications of who should be carrying out the activity. The aim should be to make this efficient

and target group centred for the actions which are proactive. For the reactive actions, a certain amount of flexibility is needed. Thought should also be given to the communication flow from the beneficiaries to MSIF Chisinau Office, to the use of the Community Information Centres and the internal communication within MSIF.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation

“What do they really think about us?”

8.1 How can we tell how we're doing?

As experience with MSIF I has shown it is not enough to simply record if a meeting took place or if an article appeared in the newspaper. This will simply record the output which has occurred, but will not say anything about whether our objective has been achieved. How has the behaviour of the target audience changed? We cannot possibly be aware of all of the initiatives happening in the 235 villages where MSIF has worked, so we must assist those communities to provide feedback. We should also be aware that there may be a time delay before the result of the communication activity starts to change the behaviour of the target audience.

All that we want to do is to be able to answer honestly – how are we doing with our communication activities? To do that effectively we need to find out more about the effect of our communication efforts.

To use the language of the M&E experts, we should not just be bean counters or people ticking boxes, we need to assess the quality of the communication and the effect it has had on the target audiences.

8.2 Surveys

One of the classic methods of showing if communication is working is to carry out questionnaires with the same people over a fixed time period, for example every 3 months. The initial findings are called a base survey and can show the level of knowledge of the target audience. Questions related to different communication activity can determine not just if people saw or heard about the activity, but whether they did anything about it.

Another method is to carry out an impact assessment of beneficiaries as has occurred under MSIF I. This has shown a high satisfaction rating with MSIF, but because of the way the questions were structured, it has allowed an insight into how both attitudes and behaviour have altered. Sometimes new issues are also revealed which are not mentioned at public meetings or training workshops (e.g. the inability of the poorest families to afford new gas or water supplies). A result of the impact assessment was to show how implementation agencies who have worked with MSIF are now able to actively on applying for new projects. The impact assessment also showed that not all of the people with whom MSIF staff come into contact believe that MSIF staff really understand the difficulties the poor communities and vulnerable groups face in their everyday life.

8.3 Some Evaluation Methods

This is not a definitive list, but it does give an indication of how we can judge whether our communication activities are starting to be successful. A few examples are shown below.

a) Community Information Centre – Communication Campaign

Evaluation Methods

Are staff well trained?

Are more people using the centre?

Is there good feedback from the centre?

Is the centre increasing its range of activities

b) Promotion campaign for meeting in small town

Evaluation Methods

How many people attended the meeting

The quality of awareness

Whether lessons can be learned from the process

c) Article in newspaper announcing new competition

Evaluation Methods

Response from competition

Follow up articles

Extra interest among beneficiary associations

d) Presentation to deputy minister of MSIF II

Evaluation Methods

Minister demands actions from other government officials

A new draft law is put forward

Greater co-operation is demanded with MSIF

e) Workshop on best practice/lessons learned for local administration and potential partners

Evaluation Methods

Willingness of local administration to change ways of working

Greater co-operation with other partners

More linkages between communities

Enthusiasm for new microprojects with both MSIF and non MSIF funding

Annex 1.

Communication Objective - _____

AUDIENCE	BEHAVIOUR	MESSAGE		CHANNELS	EVALUATION
		Simple Message	Secondary Information		

The idea behind using this table is that it should remind us of the questions to be asked when designing and planning any communication activity. Each time the objective should be clear and a different approach will probably need to be taken with each type of target audience.

The starting point should be to centre the ideas on the needs of the MSIF partners. Then we identify which target audience is the most important. (do others later)

What change of behaviour are we seeking

What is the main headline/simple message

What is the secondary information

Which channels/methods of communication will we use

How can we measure if we have been successful – if not what else should we do?

If you do this each time you will start to get used to preparing different communication activity. Your next step might be to put this into a workplan with deadlines and divisions of responsibility with colleagues and partners.