A3: Messaging Guide to Encourage Agencies to Engage in Closer Coordination

- Who is this tool for? This document is designed to introduce topics and techniques for facilitating communication and coordination between different agencies (especially health and non-health agencies) on population targeting. It is intended to guide countries to bring all the necessary institutions to the table and generate the motivation needed to work together - especially where there is one or more player that is not currently fully invested.
- How was it produced? This tool starts with a description of a strategic communications planning process previously proposed by the JLN, then augments this with specific insights related to population targeting that were created by members and facilitators of the Joint Learning Network Learning Collaborative on Population Targeting (LCPT), at a dedicated brainstorming workshop held in September 2021.

Often there will be a desire on the part of one or more agencies to work together more closely in population targeting (perhaps sharing tasks, or ensuring that the data from two separate reforms is interoperable), but key players will be missing from the table. For example, the health and social protection ministries might be enthusiastic, but the finance ministry might not see it as a priority, or the statistics bureau and national health insurer may agree to a plan but need the support of the ministry of economic planning.

In these instances, a strategic communications and engagement process may be needed to generate understanding and motivation on the part of one or more agencies - as well as to take their priorities and views on board. To assist with this, this document sets out a process that health and other practitioners and officials can go through to think about how they approach this engagement. It starts with a description of a three-stage process recommended by the Joint Learning Network for strategic communications in general, the fills this out with specific recommendations for the types of messages that are likely to be most successful when communicating with other agencies about institutional coordination for population targeting. Finally, it suggests an exercise and template which can be used by countries to systematically create and implement these ideas.

Strategic Communication

Strategic communication showcases the deliberate and coordinated actions that are intended to inform, influence, or persuade key stakeholders. The JLN has developed a framework and practical guide for government stakeholders to successfully engage one another (JLN, 2018), which describes three sequential phases of action.
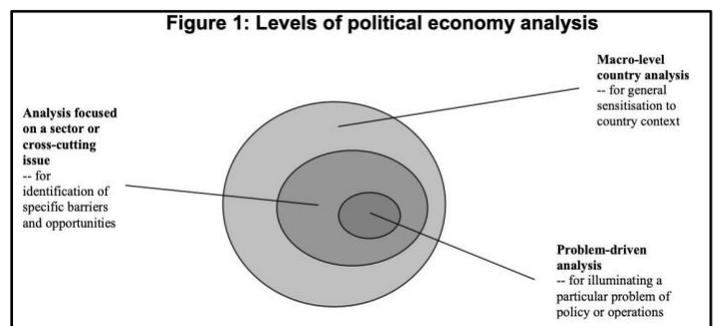
Phase One: Identify Communication Priorities

The first phase focuses on conducting the requisite analysis to identify the barriers and opportunities for collaboration - i.e. who's thinking and actions need to change, and what is it that they most want? Here, objectives should be identified which clearly identify the problems that need to be addressed and potential solutions - ideally from the perspective of the stakeholder itself, but also with regard to wider systematic barriers to coordination (see Tool A1).

Governance and political economy (GPE) analysis helps identify the structural, political, and socioeconomic factors that can influence, facilitate, or hold back policy change. It will help to identify the key 'hot button' issues against which the proposed coordination can map, so that there is a clear incentive and motivation for the external stakeholder to support the proposed project. It should also include a clear statement of the goals for the proposed coordination, if this has not been done already.

Key Considerations in GPE Analysis	
Institutional and Governance Arrangements	• Relevant government ministries and agencies and their interactions • Laws and regulations • Policy processes • Formal and informal rules or operating procedures
Political Economy Factors	• Structural factors such as geography, social stratification, and power dynamics • Economics and market dynamics • Cultural norms and social trends • Stakeholder perceptions and incentives

"Political Economy Analysis How To Note," DFID practice paper, July 2009.

The most successful examples of this stage in the process have at least some involvement from the external stakeholder itself, for example, advice from friendly officials in the agency who can share the organization's current thinking and advise on what approach is most likely to succeed.

Phase Two: Develop an Action Plan

With a clear understanding of the goals, stakeholders, and policy environment, your agency may begin making strategic decisions about their communication approach, such as what the key messages to focus on should be, how they should be communicated and who should be the messenger.

Lay out the full current understanding of the motivations and barriers of the target stakeholder(s) - whether they be organizational, financial, cultural or structural in nature. These may be different at different layers of the organization, so it is important to determine what individual motivations might be important at ministerial, director or managerial levels. Key messages can be developed around these characteristics, and actions to communicate each of these. Along with 'who does what', this forms the basis of your action plan. Finally, establish a timeframe to achieve your action plan. This covers dates and deadlines, events, and planning for resource allocation. Importantly, before implementing your action plan, it is suggested that you take a step back and conduct a "reality check" to carefully assess if the plan is set up for success. More information for developing a plan can be found in the [WHO Strategic Communications Framework for Effective Communications](#).

Phase Three: Implement and Adapt

As we have learned from the JLN model of co-learning and co-facilitation, learning in itself is a continuous process and there is no one correct way to address problems. There are no easy answers, and it is important to monitor your communication strategy, actively learn what is happening, and adapt when needed as the environment changes. Adaptation can be formal or informal measures, such as reassessing your strategy based on stipulated timely evaluations or convening casual discussion groups to reflect. So long as you are responsive to progress and feedback, adaptive measures are an ongoing process that allows you to improve communication and relationships over time. Build a process for regularly assessing the status of your goals and objectives, and adapt if need be.

What Messages are Most Likely to 'Cut Through'?

The above process is designed to work with any strategic communications challenge among agencies working towards UHC, but what about population targeting specifically. Participants in the JLN Learning Collaborative on Population Targeting had many different objectives for improved institutional coordination, such as creating interoperable databases, eliminating duplicative functions, and improving the accuracy of targeting. The agencies they wanted to target were similarly diverse - from national identity programs, the ministries of social protection, finance and IT, as well as statistics bureaus. A sub-group of diverse participants met to consider what kinds of messages would be cut through when dealing with these types of challenges. Drawing on their discussions, the following lessons emerged:

1. **Leverage authority:** Getting the support and approval of an even higher authority than the target agency/individual first is a very effective way of motivating action. "The President says" is more powerful than "my minister says".
2. **Keep it simple:** Try to keep the message and what they need to do about it clear and simple - with a very specific set of actions you need from them at the outset, as well as what you will do from your side.
3. **Stress the ultimate good:** Stress the important benefits that will be achieved from the citizen's perspective, or the current users/beneficiaries of that agency's services.

4. **Cultivate connections:** Having someone on the inside of the target agency who is sympathetic to the need to work together can be essential, both at providing insights early on, and being a supportive voice for your proposals internally.
5. **Initiate engagement early:** Don't wait until the entire idea has been finalized so that you are presenting the target agency with a fully completed idea. Most agencies like the opportunity to input into an initiative in order to feel ownership of it, so make sure you engage in a way that means they can genuinely input into the project. If they feel you are lecturing at them they are less likely to listen.
6. **Think people, not just institutions:** Personal motivations of the individuals you want to work with can be just as important as the institution's interests, so think about how your proposals might advance their interests as well as the wider organization's.
7. **Bring senior officials:** Showing that the issue is important enough for your institution to bring the most senior people is likely to communicate that the target agency should treat it seriously too.
8. **Make sure you are inviting the right people:** When thinking about why the participants themselves did not respond to offers from other agencies, the chief reason was that the invitation was not extended to the right person - i.e. it was not in their scope to deal with the issue being proposed. Make sure you are targeting the right individuals.
9. **Learn together:** Training staff together is a good way of building connections and generating debate in an environment where people's minds are likely to be more open to change. If training is needed to upskill staff at an early stage of the project, be sure to extend this opportunity to people in the target agency too.
10. **Consider small gestures:** Small gestures that show the importance you place on the target agency's involvement, such as offering to pay for any travel or accommodation needed to attend meetings, can have an outsized impact on facilitating cooperation.

Suggested exercise

If your agency needs to affect a change in attitude or behaviour in one or more external ministries to move forward with an institutional coordination initiative for population targeting, we suggest using the template strategic communications planning tool, which was created to accompany the JLN strategic communications guide mentioned above. Go through its three stages and consider how the lessons above on population targeting might be applied to move forward and achieve change. The planning tool template is available for download at the JLN website using this link:
https://www.jointlearningnetwork.org/resources/strategic-communication-for-universal-health-coverage-planning-tool/

Additional Resources:

Health Communication Capacity Collaborative. (n.d.). Social and Behavior Change Communication. Retrieved from Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs: http://ccp.jhu.edu/social-behavior-change-communication/

JLN (2018). Strategic Communication for Universal Health Coverage: Practical Guide. Joint Learning Network for Universal Health Coverage, Health Finance and Governance Project, Abt Associates, Results for Development. https://www.jointlearningnetwork.org/resources/strategic-communication-for-universal-health-coverage-practical-guide/

Overseas Development Institute. (2009, January). Planning Tools: Stakeholder Analysis. Retrieved from ODI Publications: https://www.odi.org/publications/5257-stakeholder-analysis

The World Bank. (2007). World Congress on Communication for Development: Lessons, Challenges, and the Way Forward. Retrieved from The World Bank: http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/290941468138271611/World-congress-on-communication-for-development-lessons-challenges-and-the-way-forward

The World Bank. (n.d.). What Is Stakeholder Analysis? Retrieved from World Bank Publications: http://www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/anticorrupt/PoliticalEconomy/PDFVersion.pdf