

Ron Sanders speech on .....

We think we know the message. But what is the question. In other words, since there is no monolithic audience, the question is different depending on what the specific audience is interested in. Messages, therefore have to be tailored to the audience for which they are intended. Often, the transmissions of these messages are not best achieved by the use of mass media; interpersonal communications with smaller groups of people or sectoral groups tend to be more effective. Work with schoolchildren; schoolteachers; and special interest groups as we heard in the earlier session are more effective tools for communication than the mass media. The mass media: radio, tv, newspapers—are extremely useful for creating awareness of issues in a general sense. But attracting media attention is not easy. Media tends to be involved in current and pressing issues, and there is considerable competition in attracting their attention. Messages, therefore have to be cast in the context of news, and linked to current developments to attract media attention. The media is best at alerting the public to current issues particularly if they involve some controversy, but it is not always best for informing and educating large groups of people. Selection of media for delivering messages is also an social-economic decision. In the Caribbean, for instance, radio remains the most effective of the mass media because almost everyone has access to radio; not everyone buys a daily newspaper; and television now tends to be dominated by foreign material, with very little local programs. For certain audiences, particularly middle and higher income groups and special interest groups. The internet has become the medium of choice. Facebook, twitter, are popular as are chat groups, particularly those that relate to issues within countries. So in selecting the medium to use for transmitting specific messages, careful consideration has to be given to economic and social conditions in the country targeted. It could also be a mistake to assume that the media is aware of the issues and can report on them or transmit them in a comprehensive way. Broadcasters/Journalists work on tight schedules moving from urgent story to another. Opportunities for researching material are not limitless. In this connection the messenger has to ensure three things:

1. Hold short seminars/information sessions with key journalists/broadcasters to sensitize the message and its issues, so that they have as full and complete sense of the issue as possible;
2. Maintain up to date web information on internet websites that your public/broadcasters can access easily when messages become issues.
3. Approach journalists/broadcasters with new and updated information on a regular basis and alert them to message related issues that are stories.

In all this, messengers also have to be conscious that there are other messengers with messages that are designed to deny or contradict your message. An example of this is a Japanese-financed film that has been shown recently on Caribbean television claiming that whales are eating the fish-stocks in the Caribbean and depriving people of food and therefore culling whales is in the interest of the people of the Caribbean. The Japanese also pay “certain journalists” in the Caribbean to promote their pro-whaling position and to exaggerate their contribution to the Caribbean.

Anti-whaling messengers, therefore should learn from the Japanese that getting your message across using the media in part, requires funding on a consistent basis until the objective is achieved. It will not be achieved until:

1. The audiences are identified
2. The messages are tailored to them
3. Broadcasters/journalists are well informed
4. Selection of the most effective media for specific messages is worked out
5. There is a coherent and cohesive approach to the use of media for the achievement of message delivery;
6. Finally that this work is consistent and funded.