







# UNEP-MAP

## Draft Communications Strategy 2012-2017



June 2011

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## 1. Background

### 1.1 Overview

The Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) has come a long way since its inception in 1975. MAP's general objective is to contribute to the improvement of the marine and coastal environment and the promotion of sustainable development in the Mediterranean region. Its main political achievement is the adoption of the Barcelona Convention and seven legal protocols conceived to protect the Mediterranean marine and coastal environment, and establishing an institutional framework of cooperation covering all 21 countries bordering The Mediterranean Sea. In this context, MAP components assist Mediterranean countries to fulfil their commitments under the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, and implement the decisions of the meetings of the Contracting Parties including the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) and MCSDD recommendations. Now counting 22 Contracting Parties, MAP sets out a coherent legal and institutional cooperation framework to facilitate, support and coordinate regional action to improve the quality of life of the Mediterranean population through responding to pressures on the environment and reducing negative impact as well as restoring and maintaining ecosystem status, structures and functions.

An effective and targeted communications strategy supports the environmental objectives put forward in the Barcelona Convention and amplifies the reach of MAP messages.

The Convention's **main advocacy objectives** are to:

- Assess and control marine pollution;
- Ensure sustainable management of natural marine and coastal resources;
- Integrate the environment in social and economic development;
- Protect the marine environment and coastal zones through prevention and reduction of pollution, and as far as possible, elimination of pollution, whether land or sea-based;
- Protect the natural and cultural heritage;
- Strengthen solidarity among Mediterranean coastal States;
- Contribute to improvement of the quality of life.

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In order to fully take advantage of latest developments, and to tackle new challenges and opportunities as well as scientific progress, MAP in 2009 shifted to a flexible planning mode. The Contracting Parties adopted the first five year strategic and integrated work program, covering the period 2010-2015. The work program is guided by the overarching objective to implement the ecosystems approach in The Mediterranean through six thematic priority areas:

- Combating pollution;
- Biodiversity conservation and protection;
- Integrated coastal zone management;
- Sustainable consumption and production;
- Adaptation to climate change;
- Improved governance.

Policy and communication activities need to follow the same vision. Therefore, this Communications Strategy, conceived for the period 2012-2017, seeks to support the political objectives of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols and aligns with the above-mentioned priorities. This strategy builds on the initial communications approach and will aim to advance MAP's overall goal of addressing threats to the marine and costal environment of the Mediterranean Sea.

The strategy has been developed in line with the Governance decision included in the report of the 15th Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and its Protocols from 18 January 2008<sup>1</sup>, the mandates of the MAP components and objectives to enhance the impact and visibility of MAP actions as defined during the 16<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and its Protocols in Marrakesh (Morocco), 3-5 November 2009<sup>2</sup>, the assessment of MAP information activities at the Bureau meeting in Rabat in May 2010, and MAP's Information Strategy presented at the fifth meeting of the Executive Coordination Panel in Tunisia in February 2009. It is to be

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<sup>1</sup> UNEP(DEPI)/MED IG.17/10

<sup>2</sup> UNEP(DEPI)/MED IG.19/8

presented and approved by the Contracting Parties at [OCCASION] in [LOCATION] on [DATE].

### 1.2 Overall Communications Approach

The UNEP-MAP communications approach is undergoing a timely strategy revitalisation. The new Communications Strategy 2012-2017 will align with the political priorities of UNEP-MAP and the thematic areas outlined in the five year strategic and integrated work program 2010-2015. It is also informed by insights gained from independent research carried out by a communications agency in 2010, which serves as the basis for this strategy. The researchers undertook expert interviews with internal and external stakeholders, a materials audit, online research and an analysis of selected media coverage, which resulted in a perceptions-oriented communications landscape assessment and recommendations.

As mandated by the Governance Paper<sup>3</sup>, the Secretariat presented the preliminary recommendations of the external assessment to the Bureau of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and its Protocols Rabat (Morocco), 5-6 May 2010<sup>4</sup> where the three pillar approach, on which this strategy is based, was endorsed:

- Pass a MAP common message across with a view to clearly brand all components as part of the same organization;
- Identify and mobilize strong partners from the civil society and from private sector;
- Use a campaign approach with view to inspire other actors, at regional and national levels and the public at large, around key issues.

This strategy builds on the groundwork achieved over the recent years and consolidates key achievements, including the regional annual Coast Day celebrations in Slovenia and Turkey as well as of the establishment of the annual Ecomeda Forums and the regional presentations of the State of Environment and Development Report of 2009 with the participation of the Environment Ministers and of their partners. Concurrent to this, the strategy outlines new structures, approaches and tools necessary to increase MAP's visibility and maximize the impact of common policies, strategies, action plans and analysis

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<sup>3</sup> UNEP(DEPI)/MED IG.17/10

<sup>4</sup> UNEP/BUR/70/5



designed to advance the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols in the Mediterranean region and internationally.

Although the UNEP-MAP goals remain ambitious, they are set against the backdrop of financial realism. The formulation of this strategy has been guided by an understanding that UNEP-MAP financial and human resources are finite. Practical and budgetary feasibility has therefore been taken into account when developing this 5-year strategy and focus has been placed on the approaches which can be implemented with MAP's current resources.

This strategy seeks to:

- address benefits of and barriers to communication, both external and internal;
- outline communications goals and specific objectives 2012-2017;
- suggest an approach to codifying key messages;
- define target groups;
- propose an overall strategic communications framework;
- measure success against objectives.

It is also a flexible and evolving framework that aims to be reactive to the challenges present in the Mediterranean region while providing all MAP components with appropriate guidance so that tools and communication activities to advance our collective goals can be easily identified.

This strategy recognizes the potential that UNEP-MAP can have that transcends data gathering and information dissemination and suggests proactive communication activities that unleash this potential further.

A separate and more detailed Action Plan, defining principal actions, timelines and owners, is attached to this document,

## **2. Communications Strategy**

### **2.1 Strategic issues assessment**

As any other large organization, UNEP-MAP similarly faces risks and opportunities that ultimately shape the UNEP-MAP communications strategy in the Mediterranean. To set a benchmark for future planning in 2010 UNEP-MAP contracted a consultancy to assess existing communications and information programs as well as to solicit in-depth and confidential opinions from internal and external stakeholders alike, concerning UNEP-

MAP's visibility and effectiveness. The developed SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis (see Annex I) synthesized the major findings and forms the basis for MAP's communication niches, targets, needs and opportunities presented in this strategy. UNEP-MAP subsequently held a workshop in the margins of the meeting of the Executive Coordination Panel in Barcelona (Spain), 8-9 July 2010 to discuss and present the findings to the participants. The ECP Meeting endorsed the presented recommendations and the three pillar approach and nominated focal points for communications within MAP components.

### 2.1.1 Benefits

#### *External*

Effective external communication increases visibility and public support for MAP's objectives for the protection of marine and coastal environment of the Mediterranean. It will further enhance MAP's credibility as a regional body supporting and coordinating the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and Protocols. This strategy is envisaged to act as a further springboard for communicating globally about MAP'S key issues and in key upcoming environmental fora.

#### *Internal*

Effective internal communication leverages existing synergies, optimizes impact and enhances awareness and involvement of staff. The goal of streamlined internal communications processes is a more integrated approach towards creating a bigger push for the same environmental issues from the MAP Coordinating Unit, components, and partners, thereby strengthening the organization's collective capacity to communicate and engage externally.

### 2.1.2 Barriers

#### *External*

- Changes in the political and economic situation in the Mediterranean countries bear the risk of shifting focus, resources and commitment from communicating about the extensive need for further converging environmental policies in the Mediterranean riparian countries.
- Today's heavily saturated media landscape poses a challenge to effectively breaking through to extended target audiences with UN-driven stories on environmentally sustainable practices.

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- Media and other multipliers<sup>5</sup> have a documented appetite for human interest stories based on country-, citizen-, and people-centric data. The current organizational structure is not favourable to tracking results easily and demonstrating the impact of UNEP-MAP actions in this way.

### *Internal*

- There is a lack of capacity to centralize information; this is a consequence, inter alia, of inadequate coordination, limited awareness and structural deficiencies. In order for staff and partners to act as effective ambassadors, a culture shift is needed towards "360 degree communication".
- UNEP-MAP operates within a limited financial framework and our staff is not geared towards supporting a major communications undertaking. However, there is confidence that current assets can be optimized to advance common communications objectives or for reaching wider external audiences, including the general public, through mainstream media or digital tools.
- The division of communications responsibilities as well as sub-optimal strategic alignment between the Coordinating Unit and MAP components constitutes a barrier to impactful external communication since tasks and structural relations were not always clearly defined.

## 2.2 Goal

### *External*

The overarching goal is to maximize the visibility of MAP's activities and achievements in promoting sustainable development in the Mediterranean region through media and other multipliers. More specifically, the aim is to enhance and stimulate an active awareness of the fact that within the framework of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, MAP is coordinating action and facilitating cooperation amongst its stakeholders in order to deliver tangible results in the protection of the environment of the entire region.

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<sup>5</sup> Multipliers: relays of information to disseminate key messages.

Media, mainstream and social, is considered as an important channel for stimulating a constructive conversation around MAP issues and our role therein and thereby actively advancing our implicit and explicit advocacy.

The importance of information collection, production and dissemination has been recognized and proposals have been made to improve ways to inform and engage target audiences.

### *Internal*

The overall goal is to foster an organizational culture in which communication is considered equally critical to the success of the UNEP-MAP mission. Furthermore the aim is to align internal stakeholders around common objectives and assign a more active role in the roll-out of jointly-agreed activities to all parties.

### **2.3 Specific Objectives**

The following aims have been set to be achieved through an integrated communication approach:

- **Raise awareness** about the critical role that the UNEP-MAP system plays in the protection of the Mediterranean environment and the promotion of sustainable development in the region.
- **Strengthen MAP's status** as an authoritative voice on the environment in the Mediterranean.
- **Engage key stakeholders** to support UNEP-MAP issues and activities in public fora and act as advocates, directly and indirectly.
- **Highlight** the need for good governance and integrated marine and land ecosystem management in the Mediterranean.
- **Inform and mobilise** the Mediterranean population with our narrative through key information and media channels.
- **Improve** internal communications practices within MAP and its components.
- **Increase** quality and quantity of media coverage.
- **Improve** quality and dissemination of information materials.

### 2.4 Target Audiences

UNEP-MAP takes a focused approach to communications to ensure maximum output at strategy mid-term review in 2014/15. The available tools and resources set an operating framework within which target audiences have been prioritized, therefore external communication activities are primarily aimed at stakeholders and multipliers involved in issues related to the sustainable development of the Mediterranean. *Note:* UNEP-MAP recognizes the benefits of large public-facing awareness campaigns, but has opted to remain focused and leverage MAP components and partners for maximum reach.

- The **stakeholder** community includes governments, in particular Contracting Parties, RACs, Focal Points, and partners.
- The second target group, **multipliers**, include media, NGOs, multilateral organizations, national and local administrations, businesses and academics/researchers. Those groups serve as effective communication channels to further amplify UNEP-MAP messages to the general public, in particular coastal residents, and also act as relays for more targeted initiatives.

### 2.5 Key Messages

For this communications strategy to be truly successful, MAP's overall goal, specific objectives and key messages need to fully align across its components.

Effective message frameworks are dynamic and adaptable over time as conditions change, and as behaviours evolve, and where successes and barriers are encountered. Common messaging will be informed by and tailored to the specific needs of the various target audiences and guided by the global environmental agenda and specific political developments in the region.

A solid message platform will provide a framework for understanding MAP and its role in a way that differs from others. Applying and reapplying common messaging consistently, broadly and coherently will lead to a clear, recognizable identity and an ability to speak with one voice and many accents. Ultimately, there is a clear link between effective communications and impactful advocacy.

Primary research has shown that broader audiences are not conversant in the specialized terminology used by MAP and have their own interests and perspectives. Therefore, the common messaging will use simple and clear language that will be understood by educated generalists from within and outside the field of environment.

- A key component of this strategy will be the ultimate alignment on messaging which will result in the creation of messaging framework including:
  - MAP's goal and vision of success;
  - Areas MAP works in;
  - How MAP's work brings solutions to Mediterranean issues;
  - What MAP concentrates on.

### 2.6 Strategies

MAP's Information and Communication Strategy 2012-2017 is based on a "campaign model" – Unify, Mobilize and Inspire (see Annex II). This campaign model creates a solid but sufficiently agile communications framework that can guide our activities in the next five years. It sets out a forward-looking campaign that is to unfold sequentially based on a series of tactical approaches in line with key political priorities, milestone projects and platforms.

#### 2.6.1 Structure: More effective internal coordination

Effective communication cannot be achieved by the Coordinating Unit alone. Therefore, a clear communications structure across MAP and its components needs to be created, including the assignment of different and strategic roles to the various categories of Focal Points of the Contracting Parties and to the RACs.

To this end, the Coordinating Unit will develop guidelines through a Communications Responsibility Matrix to help organise and direct the harmonised implementation of communication activities by all internal parties.

In addition to this coordination function, the Coordinating Unit has to ensure a supporting role by providing adequate resources and tools whilst encouraging active participation of RACs as defined in the Protocols to the Barcelona Convention as well as subsequent decisions of Contracting Parties.

A **Regional Activity Centre for Information and Communication** (INFO-RAC) was established in 2005 to enhance the visibility of MAP. Its mandate specifically refers to information and communication, and it operates to contribute to "collecting and sharing information, raising public awareness and participation, and enhancing decision-making processes at the regional national and local levels."<sup>6</sup> In this context, the mission of INFO-

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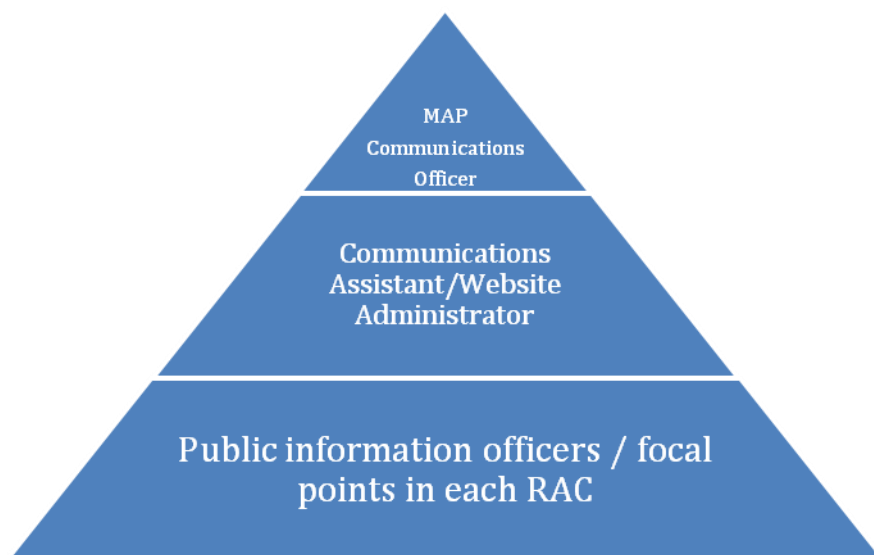
<sup>6</sup> UNEP(DEPI)/MED IG. 19/8

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RAC is to provide adequate information and communication services and infrastructure technologies to Contracting Parties to implement Article 12 on public participation and Article 26 of the Barcelona Convention on reporting, as well as several articles related to reporting requirements under the different Protocols, thus strengthening MAP information management and communication capabilities.

The new communications structure will be an important tool to leverage INFO/RAC's expertise and experience in implementing strong communications tactics and sharing it across the MAP network. In addition to its environmental information responsibilities, we see INFO/RAC's role as one of an 'enabling partner' directly embedded in the MAP communications structure. INFO-RAC is envisaged to handle specific communication tasks while establishing a clear reporting structure led by the MAP-based Communications Officer to ensure common strategy and execution across the MAP system and to ensure that all communications efforts are in line with MAP's strategic communications priorities.

New communications structure includes the following roles:



Key strategies:

- Align and streamline internal processes and maximize scarce resources to achieve greater impact;
- Maximize internal ownership through participatory processes;
- Emphasize INFO/RAC's role as enabling partners and leverage INFO/RAC's expertise and experience in implementing strong, locally-relevant communications tactics and sharing it across MAP's network;
- Train internal stakeholders through advocacy and regional communications workshops;
- Empower the MAP Communications Officer in Athens to coordinate and drive the strategy.

### **2.6.2 Channels: Better access to better information**

MAP is a public body and as such has a duty to inform, which it does through two key operational entry points: the website and MAP components. It is a key function of the MAP librarian to provide users with access to MAP publications and documents as well as other library holdings through the MAP website and the staff intranet. At present, MAP is hampered by inadequacies in functionality and reach. This strategy seeks to optimise the impact of information tools at our disposal by producing more diversified and higher quality content, timely information and a feedback loop.

Key strategies:

Implement a wider, multimedia-based approach by developing additional communications tools/outputs/channels in order to:

- Engage target audiences in viewing MAP-related content through improved website, social media channels and other visual materials to take advantage of opportunities in digital space and reduce paper costs;
- Bring the MAP success story to life in real, human terms through country-, citizen-, and people-centric data and visual materials;
- Consolidate messages to appear as the clear voice for the Mediterranean marine environment on the international policy level;



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- Implement a media strategy with news and human interest stories to educate various audiences;
- Leverage synergies with our partners including UNEP HQ and the UNEP/MAP/GEF project “Medpartnership” whose resources and assets are complementary.

### 2.6.3 Targeted Campaigns: Stimulating active awareness

This strategy utilises a combination of complementary communications tools to ensure optimal message uptake and broadest possible reach in target regions. It also factors in the need to remain agile and locally relevant: different countries have different communication cultures, and with a toolbox of materials and initiatives, the communication mix can be varied and adapted as required whilst maintaining the overall message.

Key strategies:

- Focus on three key milestones projects and/or platforms each year to demonstrate impact and relevance and to drive steady media coverage that also taps into longer-lead feature opportunities;
  - Drive interest in and support for Med Coast Day;
  - Establish the State of the Environment report/bi-annual thematic reports as key plank for our external communication;
- Capitalize on synergies with stakeholders and local partners around key milestone projects/platforms in order to drive the news agenda;
- Leverage international milestones and observances to ensure broader relevance of our work (see Action Plan for more detail);
- Optimise impact of our information materials through better design, thematic focus and new distribution channels.

### 2.6.4 Proactive Partnerships: Raising the profile of our actions

This strategy outlines a set of approaches that seek to enhance MAP’s overall visibility and impact. MAP partners and stakeholders play an immensely valuable role in this process as they lend their voice to our information and communication campaigns. Taking into consideration the limit of MAP resources and capabilities, improving stakeholder coordination, aligning messages, strategies and resources will increase efficiency as well as demonstrate impact and on-the-ground relevance.

Key strategies:

- Engage select advocacy NGOs to amplify media outreach efforts as well as to engage the general public with whom they have more direct ties;
- Enlist and empower third party advocates to amplify MAP messages through media and in information materials;
- Showcase work/collaboration with the private sector through business-media;
- Add voices of partner international organizations such as GEF in media to raise MAP's visibility with key audiences;
- Align in-country/regional communications efforts with key challenges and priorities to demonstrate relevance of MAP issues.

### 3. Measurement

It is important to consider measurement at the beginning and be clear from the start about what is to be achieved, how the objectives will be met and what measurements will be used along the way to monitor progress and success.

Measuring is directly linked with strategy and impact. It not only concerns quantitative results but also qualitative analysis of the significance and meaning behind the findings. In an environment where communication has the power to shape conversation and drive policy outcomes, it is critical to measure the effectiveness of all strategies and tactics.

As it is impossible to measure everything, and not everything that is important can be measured a manageable number of key indicators have been identified as areas of focus. The metrics that can be used are numerous and varied including: tracking the number of information requests put to INFO/RAC's, number of press briefings, perception tracking surveys, analyzing website traffic, setting up ratings buttons for online content etc.

A three-pronged approach to measurement will be applied, combining relevant metrics, strategic interpretation and forward-looking insights, including the following:

- Quantitative measures, such as media metrics, website hits and information requests;
- Advocacy measures, which track and evaluate engagement and delivery of messages by others;

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- Reputation measures, which tap into media influencers to assess progress and inform changes to tactics and approaches.

Using the primary research conducted by an independent consultant in 2010 as a communications baseline/benchmark, a mid-term review in 2014/15 will be aimed for to use as opportunity to take stock of progress and, if necessary, calibrate the approach.

Success will result in key audiences having a positive regard for UNEP-MAP and its mission, accompanied by an awareness of key messages, and/or perceptions consistent with the message framework agreed in 2012.

### **4. Resources**

This strategy can be partially implemented with the use of existing financial and human resources. Currently, the Coordinating Unit can rely on a budget of approximately EUR 180,000 for the two-year period of 2012-2013 dedicated to operationalising external communications activities in addition to some additional resources in the Regional Activity Centres. A Communications Officer who will be supported by an Information Assistant/Website Administrator will help us fully capitalise on our new approach.

## 5. Annex I – SWOT Analysis

### STRENGTHS

- Unique and successful representation of the region on equal footing
- Legal framework empowers Ministers for Environment
- Successful projects and outcomes in place
- Source of new data and research, and environmental knowledge and expertise
- Effective communication at technical level
- Holistic approach: scientific, technical, legal
- Strong network of partners
- Present online, understood and used by stakeholders familiar with MAP

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Draw on region's diversity and knowledge
- Unique environmental bridge between North/South Mediterranean
- Partners willing to advocate MAP's goals
- Many stakeholders stand to benefit from engaging with MAP
- Global visibility on climate change
- Information increasingly accessed online – more interactive and wide-reaching
- Catalyst for environmental information outside of MAP

### WEAKNESSES

- Mediterranean's different political priorities
- Governments do not always support Environment Ministries
- Confusion about MAP and its activities
- MAP's communications centre on focal points
- Complex internal structure
- Lack of centralized coordination between MAP and RACs
- Gaps in governance
- Information activities focus on technical level
- Lack of high-level political support

### THREATS

- Decentralized structure makes it difficult to speak with one voice
- Limited financial resources and capacity unlikely to dramatically change
- Loss of some credibility because of insufficient concrete outcomes
- Varied online access across Mediterranean limits advocacy
- Lack of global visibility on some of MAP's issues

## 6. Annex II – Campaign approach

### UNIFY

#### *The One Voice campaign*

- Create a clear communications structure in MAP
- Agree on common messaging based on solid research and therefore create a bigger push for the same environmental issues from MAP, including the MAP components and all of the partners
- Maximize internal buy-in with internal launch and consistent internal materials

### MOBILISE

#### *Proactive partnerships*

- Implement 2012-2017 communications strategy, anchored around three key milestones projects or platforms each year
- Tailor materials to reach broader audiences
- Train MAP and partners through advocacy and regional communications workshops and support for select NGO partners to engage public
- Create same look, feel, messages on all websites – profile success stories

### INSPIRE

#### *Advocate Ignition*

- Identify and engage select advocacy NGOs to amplify outreach efforts and inform key opinion formers
- Launch business roundtable to discuss MAP certification or criteria for partnership
- Leverage international organizations to raise visibility and influence with media and political audiences
- Engage the general public by tailoring materials, leveraging NGO partners and through media
- Implement a media strategy with news and human interest stories and background briefings to educate journalists