

The Public Awareness Campaign

V.I. Sokolov

The understanding on the importance of developing an appropriate social norm and attitude to water resources management is rising. A personal attitude to this problem should be interlinked with social norms. Decisions on water resources management must be based on the social values of water resources. It is necessary to establish a balance between commercial activities, emotions and social values.

There are a few reasons why the public awareness needs to be raised, and community representatives should be involved in water resources management:

- urgent need in water conservation;
- rising of sanitary requirements;
- protection of ecosystems;
- incentives for the public participation in governance;
- developing the self-regulating organizations;
- reforming the water policy; and
- heightened awareness of the new generation on water problems

The strategy of awareness creation should be grounded on the fact that water governance becomes a part of political instruments. Raised awareness is the direct response medium where all stakeholders specify their roles, responsibilities and ways of meeting their interests. At the same time, an awareness creation facilitates the formation of social norms and behavior concerning all members of the society, aimed at efficient, environmentally sound and cautious use of water, i.e. social encouragement of the principles of sustainable development.

While Initiating public participation campaigns, it is necessary to keep in mind the following:

- how many people need to be covered by this campaign;
- target groups;
- agenda of the campaign, its all-inclusiveness and detailed elaboration; and
- extent of public involvement

Key components of the campaign:

- market aspects;
- educational aspects;
- social / local aspects

Phases of the campaign:

- assessment of the current practice and search for possible improvements (motives);
- elaboration of the ideology;
- defining methods of public relations and involvement; and
- indicators for evaluation

Assessment of the current practice and search for possible improvements:

- analysis of the current practices of water use;
- assessment of current “good practices”;
- coordinating the water-saving activities;
- defining the objectives and indicators of public participation (taking into account all interests, but involving only those who can really change something or influence on something);
- seeking acceptable solutions; and
- testing on the pilot objects – demonstration of advanced methods.

Elaborating the ideology:

- search for valid arguments;
- taking into account religious postulates;
- taking into account cultural values and traditions; and
- seeking the simple methods for describing any problem (the clarity – «fool-proofness»).

Definition of methods of public relations and involvement:

- personal presentations of professionals and involving mass media;
- intensifying the campaign in a short periods of time;

- brochures and booklets;
- traditional events (festivals, festive occasions, fairs, etc.);
- water fee charges; and
- involvement of advertising agencies

Indicators for evaluation:

- quantitative assessments (amount of people, women, target groups, etc.);
- evaluating the extent of participation;
- discussing the concepts in focus-groups; and
- Sociological surveys and interviews (questionnaire).

Training of trainers for the mobilization campaign:

- training teachers;
- training trainers; and
- a package of manuals and learning aids for trainers.

Other instruments:

- the water measuring and accounting system (at water sources and on the field);
- water pricing;
- water conservation;
- financial incentives; and
- access to water-related information (periodical publication of data: who, how much and for which purpose consumes water).

Supporting public participation:

- political support (lobbying through politicians);
- governmental support, interviews of professionals;
- support of scientists; and

- support of religious leaders.

Support by cooperative and non-commercial sectors:

- water users associations;
- “round tables”;
- large water consumers;
- municipal authorities;
- public events organized by sponsors;
- water-saving contests (bonus funds); and
- trade unions.

Education:

- activities in schools;
- seminars for teachers;
- target children’s creativity (target exhibitions);
- summer camps;
- study tours to water infrastructure;
- posters (instructional wall sheet); and
- inclusion of specialized topics in the curricula (“Water and History”, “Water and Legislation”, “Water Resources –Geography”, “Water and Chemistry”, “Water and Mathematics”, etc.).

Involving mass media:

- newspapers, magazines, radio, TV;
- posters, booklets (educational to support initiatives);
- institutional aspects of involving mass media;
- Internet (websites, virtual conferences, nets);
- press-conferences; and
- exhibitions and concerts.

The key motto for the public awareness campaign is: “from awareness to practical actions!” Some details of practical implementation of the public awareness campaigns in the form of social mobilization in the Fergana Valley were described in Chapter 4 above.