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What is PSC?

Project Support Communications (PSC)\* can be defined as the systematic use of communication techniques— either interpersonal or via the mass media— aiming at facilitating the implementation of UNICEF-assisted programmes/projects.

The end result is usually changed attitude and behaviour, active participation and support of the people in the programme area. PSC-type activities have been under way for a long time; techniques vary from traditional (e.g. puppetry, popular theater, singing) to modern (e.g. radio, TV, video).

Because of the heavy use of media, PSC has often times been mistaken as simply the production of audio-visual materials. It is actually a much more complicated process involving pre-operational research, planning, production and pretesting of materials, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and not just a one-way, direct, communicator-to-passive-receiver activity. Above all, PSC demands an understanding of the audience and its needs and aspirations as it helps to identify potential problems and increase communication between ALL people involved in a project at ALL levels. It ensures communication from beneficiaries to planners, among planners and from planners to beneficiaries.

PSC is part and parcel of the programming exercise. A PSC officer should be a regular member of the programming team.

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\* known as Development Support Communication (DSC) in UNDP.

The role of the PSC officer is to advocate the use of communication inputs for project planning and implementation, to support Programme officers by providing professional advice and technical backstopping services, and whenever possible, to assist governments in building up national capacities and facilities in PSC.

## What can PSC do for you?

According to Guy Scandlen, ex-Regional PSC Officer for the East Asia and Pakistan Regional office in Bangkok, PSC HELPS YOU:

- solve development problems.
- motivate and change behaviour.
- plan communication strategies.
- learn about target audiences.
- choose which communications to use.
- define the content and objectives of communications.
- develop prototype materials and pretest them.
- implement and evaluate your communications.

## Duties and Responsibilities of PSC Officers in the Field

- (a) Working with programme officers, project personnel, advisers and their government counterparts, identify communication dimensions in existing and planned UNICEF-assisted projects.
- (b) Advising the assisted government ministries, the Representative and programme officers in pre-operational research (e.g. knowledge, attitude and practice appraisal); formulating, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the communication components of the assisted programmes; participating in programme previews and reviews.
- (c) Guiding relevant ministries in the orientation and training of all levels of staff in the theory and practice of PSC in social development programmes, and strengthening national capacities in PSC.
- (d) Advising representatives and programme staff on advocacy, strategy and policy support communications, and plans explaining new trends in UNICEF policy, as well as the problems and needs of children to senior government officials and planners.
- (e) Organising communication research, evaluation, training activities, exploring opportunities (e.g., use of group/village networks, appropriate communication technology), and testing of communication concepts and methods within the context of programmes for children.

- (f) In collaboration with programme staff and in concert with supply and procurement staff, supervising the administrative details related to PSC (e.g. specifications for equipment and supplies, field testing and monitoring).
  
- (g) Overseeing the production, pretesting, and subsequent modification of communication materials.
  
- (h) Identifying and selecting outside expertise and resources, orienting and supervising consultants employed for specific communication activities (e.g. production of radio or television programmes in support of specific programme objectives, evaluation of PSC programmes).
  
- (i) Designing programmes for the development and testing of field-level communication equipment (e.g. battery-or-solar-powered radio receivers or tape recorders, film and slide projectors, cameras).

PSC officers normally report to the person who has the overall responsibility for programme co-ordination.

## Functions of PSC Service at New York Headquarters

The New York Unit was established to assist the Programme Division and field offices in the promotion, programming and evaluation of PSC activities in programmes benefitting children. Specific areas include:

- (a) Strengthening of awareness and understanding among UNICEF and government staff of the concept, role, and function of PSC in the development, implementation and evaluation of programmes.
- (b) Acting as focal point for the exchange of experiences and skills, and co-ordinating communications planning, implementation and evaluation.
- (c) Providing guidance to Programme Division and field offices in the assessment and evaluation of PSC components of UNICEF-assisted programmes and projects.
- (d) Identifying PSC resources and keeping track of the latest communications research relevant to UNICEF programme work in the field.
- (e) Disseminating communications research findings and information on PSC activities to PSC and programme officers in the field through the quarterly PSC Newsletter.
- (f) Holding regular consultations and organising staff development training programmes.

(g) In collaboration with the Supply Division, providing technical backstopping to field offices in the production/purchase of education and communication supplies/equipment.

(h) Identifying, interviewing and orientating PSC officers.

## History of PSC

The first PSC unit was created in 1966 in Bangkok. It was first known as the Human Resources and Mass Communication Unit, initially financed jointly by UNICEF, UNDP and OPI, under the administrative responsibility of the Information Division in New York. The Unit was later renamed Development Support Communication Service (DSCS). Administrative responsibility was transferred to UNDP, which funded the unit's expansion, toward the end of 1969. A year later, UNICEF appointed its first PSC field officers.

The first field regional PSC service was established in India (New Delhi office) in 1972 followed by Beirut in 1973, Nairobi and New York headquarters in 1974, Bangkok and Lima (area office) in 1975 and Abidjan in 1980. In a number of large programmes, project-level PSC officers have also been appointed. Currently there are PSC posts (International Professional, National Officer, Project, and Junior Professional Officer) in the following offices:

### I. Americas Region

Lima

Brasilia

Kingston

Mexico City

Port-au-Prince

Guatemala City



II. East Asia and Pakistan Region

Bangkok  
Jakarta  
Rangoon  
Dhaka  
Islamabad

III. Eastern Africa Region

Nairobi  
Lusaka  
Harare  
Addis Ababa  
Dar-es-Salaam  
Lilongwe

IV. Eastern Mediterranean Region

Beirut  
Cairo  
Ankara  
Khartoum  
Algiers  
Rabat  
Abu Dhabi

V. New York Headquarters

VI. South Central Asia Region

New Delhi

Thimpu

Kabul

Kathmandu

Co Lombo

VII. West and Central Africa Region

Abidjan

Lagos

Brazzaville

Dakar

### How to Do PSC Step by Step

- (a) analysis of problem(s) for communication components;
- (b) specification of societal values, goals, and objectives;
- (c) identification of communication technology, resources and services;
- (d) specification of all target groups;
- (e) setting of behavioural objectives for each target group;
- (f) design of activities to achieve the behavioural objectives;
- (g) specification of budgetary needs;
- (h) design, pretesting, and production of materials and media messages to support the activities;
- (i) development of an implementation workplan and schedule;
- (j) design of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, including the identification of quantifiable indicators;
- (k) design of mechanisms for sectoral co-ordination or integration; and
- (l) monitoring of PSC inputs and outputs.

This process should be incorporated into the main phases of programme formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. By following this process, it is possible to edge PSC away from the piecemeal approach— away, for example, from the "if it is nutrition, use a poster" syndrome. This is a "fire-brigade" approach which takes place when communication is remembered after something has gone wrong, or when the intervention does not appear to have an impact on the target groups.



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**A good overview of the role of PSC in facilitating the implementation of UNICEF-assisted programmes/projects; the role of the PSC officer, views of UNICEF field officers on PSC's uses; duties and responsibilities of PSC Officers in the field; functions of PSC service at Hq; history of PSC; list of UNICEF Field offices that had PSC posts at the time; How to do PSC step by step.**

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