



Communicating Adaptation Role Playing Exercise

developed by Shaun Martin

© World Wildlife Fund, Inc. 2013. All rights reserved.

Objective: In this role-playing exercise participants to persuade someone to do something that is helpful for climate change adaptation or stop a potentially maladaptive activity. They do so by using a number of techniques and tactics described in the Communicating Climate Change Adaptation presentation (appeal to their values, use language they understand, giving a sense of hope and empowerment, etc.). Participants learn that everyone is a communicator.

Background: This exercise is designed for use with conservation groups, but can be modified for professionals working in other fields. For maximum effectiveness, this exercise should accompany a presentation that discusses effective ways to communicate climate change adaptation and climate change more generally. The activity works best for groups who already know one another very well, such as co-workers, example. The exercise may take a little while for participants to feel comfortable, but once the first person volunteers to speak to the role player, others will quickly want to join in and it then turns into a very fun activity. Good role players and facilitation are required to make sure participants learn the objectives of the exercise. Encourage or even insist that participants to use their own language for this exercise even if you do not speak their language yourself. In this situation, use an interpreter to explain to you what is happening as participants play their roles.

Time required: About 20-30 minutes.

What you will need:

- Three role-playing scenarios, translated into the local language, one each print on separate sheets of paper
- A PowerPoint presentation with each of the three role-playing scenarios on separate slides
- Three participants to play the roles that appear in the scenarios
- A printed list of the 10 tips for communicating climate change adaptation to hand out to participants (optional).

Preparation:

Read through each of the role-playing scenarios below and select 3 that will work well for your group. You can slightly modify the scenarios to make them more relevant for the region your participants work in or you can create new scenarios altogether. If necessary, translate the

scenarios into the local language your participants are most comfortable with. This is important so participants feel comfortable participating in the exercise.

Once you have selected and translated your scenarios, copy and paste them into a PowerPoint presentation with each scenario on a separate slide. Print one copy of the PowerPoint presentation with scenarios on separate sheets of paper.

Sometime well before conducting this exercise, select participants to play the roles that appear in each of the three scenarios. It is best if you can find a different person for each role, but if you cannot a single person can play more than one role. Choose people who have been active and vocal participants in the workshop, who like to make jokes and whom others seem to like and respect. You may want to ask someone familiar with the participants who might be good role players. The activity will not go well if you choose shy participants to play roles.

Give one printed scenario to each of the selected role players and explain to them they are to play the role of the person described in their scenario. The audience will use different communication techniques to persuade you to change their minds, but they must never agree and with each attempt must find a reason to justify why they will not change their minds. For example, if a participant in the audience tries to persuade them to change their mind by using a climate change or adaptation argument, the role player may say "I don't believe in climate change," or "I don't know what you are talking about when you say adaptation." The point is to allow participants in the audience to try as many techniques as possible using the 10 communications tips described in the handout. Be sure to tell your role-players that they should not share the scenario they received with other participants.

If you wish to use the list of 10 tips for communicating climate change adaptation (below), print out one copy for each participant or one or two copies for each table of participants.

EXERCISE

Project the PowerPoint presentation with the 3 scenarios you selected on to a screen so participants can see them. Distribute copies of the 10 communications tips to the participants. Explain that in this exercise one person will play the role of the person described in the scenario and it is the task of the participants to persuade the role-player to take the action or change his or her position you want. Encourage them to use the 10 communication tips on the handouts.

Have the first role player come to the front of the room and explain who he or she is (the person described in the scenario). Then have someone in the audience stand and read the scenario on the PowerPoint presentation to the entire group. Once the scenario has been read, ask the participants if anyone would like to try to persuade the role player to change his or her mind. It may take a little while for someone to speak up.

After the first person makes their appeal, the role player rejects his or her argument explaining why he or she has not been persuasive. Allow another person to try and continue this until 4-5 participants have made attempts. If there are still others who want to try, remind them there are still 2 scenarios to play and they can try in the next round.

After you complete the first round, point out which tips were used in each of the arguments (appealing to the role players values, giving a sense of hope and empowerment, avoiding using science as an argument when not appropriate). If these tips were not used, point out or have others in the audience suggest how using the tips may have been more successful. Ask the role player to tell the audience which argument he or she would have found most persuasive (even though it was rejected during the exercise) or suggest an additional argument or technique that was not used and would have been persuasive. You can also suggest your own techniques if you believe they would have been useful.

Move on to the second and third scenarios repeating this process. After the third scenario is completed, ask participants to share which techniques and tips they would find most effective in their own work and/or to share experiences where their communications for changing behavior or creating social change were successful or failed and why.

SCENARIOS

Choose 3 of these scenarios that you think will work well for your audience. You can modify them to make them more relevant to your participants, but keep the situations as generic as possible. Using real people, real places and real situations can sometimes stifle creativity because participants will be boxed in to thinking of ideas that will work only for that situation. Translate the modified scenarios into the working language of your workshop and copy and paste them into a PowerPoint presentation.

Role: the CEO of your organization (or your supervisor)

Scenario

The CEO of your organization is unwilling to embrace adaptation, probably (you think) because he or she doesn't understand the difference between current (business as usual) conservation activities and adaptation. Your organization has the opportunity to apply for a large grant for a transboundary climate adaptation project. You need his or her buy-in because you will need them sign and submit the project proposal to the donor.

Role: a co-worker

Scenario

A coworker is unwilling to embrace adaptation, probably (you think) because he or she does not understand the difference between current (business as usual) conservation activities and adaptation. Your organization has the opportunity to apply for a large grant for a transboundary

climate adaptation project. You need your co-worker's buy-in because you need him or her to help write the proposal and implement the project.

Role: a major donor to your organization

Scenario

A major donor is coming to visit your office. She has supported your work on conserving a key wetlands habitat in a protected area for the last 10 years. You know that these wetlands are highly vulnerable to climate change due to changing rainfall patterns. You want her to support the conservation of the headwaters outside the protected area to help ensure continued water flows in periods of extreme drought. She believes that climate change is real but a problem for the future. She is resistant to funding anything but the current project.

Role: Media reporter

Scenario

A radio reporter is accompanying you to see a successful protected area (PA) that your organization helped establish. You know that this protected area has already started to experience the consequences of more extreme and variable weather and that this situation will likely get worse in the future. The reporter wants to have a feel-good story that talks about the success of the protected area, which is important for your organization's credibility. However, you want to talk about the PA's vulnerability to climate change and the need for adaptation. The reporter is skeptical about that climate change is real.

Role: Government official 1 (national director of planning)

Scenario

The National Director of Planning in your country is considering a large dam to improve water security for the capital city in the face of increasing droughts. This will have negative consequences for freshwater biodiversity and water supplies for local communities downstream. You want him or her to consider an alternative that will have fewer impacts.

Role: Government official 2 (minister of economic development)

Scenario

The national socio-economic development plan calls for a dramatic expansion of aluminum smelting in the next 5 years. Aluminum production is very energy and water intensive. To address this, the plan also calls for increased hydropower production to provide electricity to the smelting operation while supporting country's climate change mitigation goals. With increased droughts predicted, the availability of hydropower for aluminum production will become highly unreliable. And of course, large dams threaten biodiversity. You have a meeting with the minister of economic development. What advice do you give him or her?

Role: Mayor of a coastal town

Scenario

A coastal town where drinking water has been contaminated by salt water during a cyclone wants to build a sea wall in an area where mangroves have been destroyed. The sea wall is unlikely to solve the problem, and will cause problems to a marine reserve further down the coast. Your organization wants to recommend to the mayor that the town restore the mangroves and create a development-free set-back area adjacent to it.

Role: Project manager from a development NGO

Scenario

A development NGO is running a community-based adaptation project that is introducing a hardier cattle breed that can survive during times of drought. However, this breed is able to forage further into the forest than the previous breeds and cattle numbers are increasing. You want to speak with the project manager to discuss the risks of maladaptation for people and the forest ecosystem and some possible alternative adaptation options.

Role: Project manager from a local conservation NGO

Scenario

A local conservation NGO has been trying to eradicate prickly pear cactus (*Opuntia*, an invasive species) in key conservation areas for a number of years. However, prickly pear has proven to be a very important food for people and livestock in times of drought. You want to speak to the project manager to discuss an approach that integrates community and ecosystem needs.

Role: Local village elder

Scenario:

In the past several years, a very traditional mountain village has experienced crop failures due to a longer and hotter dry season. To increase their income, they have decided to produce honey for sale. They have received start-up funds from a development NGO for a beekeeping project. You know that in other parts of the country, honey production is failing because plants are flowering earlier before bees are active due to the shifting timing in seasons. You want to persuade the local village elder to encourage his community to try an alternative to beekeeping.



Ten Tips for Communicating Climate Change Adaptation

1. Talking about adaptation may not require talking about climate change or even adaptation.
2. But adaptation does require talking about vulnerabilities and how to reduce them.
3. Climate change adaptation must connect with issues that people already care about.
4. Begin with what is well-understood (the past and present). Talk about what is less well-understood (the future) later.
5. Use language and choose words that your audience will understand.
6. Don't oversell the science. Uncertainty is real.
7. Be cautious of emphasizing impacts and using "doom and gloom" to get in the door.
8. Provide a sense of realistic hope and a feasible path of action.
9. Mass communications is not enough. Dialogue is most effective.
10. Jointly developed visions and solutions are more powerful.