



HIGHLIGHTS

The Communication & Behaviour Change Accelerator on World Water Week Centre Stage

- The episode *Why is effective communication important for water?* had the **3rd highest viewership** rate of the whole World Water Week – only surpassed by the Opening and the Closing plenaries.
- **Four out of five** featured keynote speakers were women
- By September 2021, the programme episodes had registered **over 4,300 views**.

The Workshops arranged before World Water Week as part of the Communication Initiative

- Workshop registrants exceeded expectations by **a remarkable 800 percent**.
- Among the registered journalists, 87 percent were from developing countries and 59 percent represented young professionals in the field. 69 percent of the communicators were women and 50 percent were under 35 years old.
- **96 percent** of post-workshop survey respondents agreed that the course would help them to communicate more powerfully about the world's water.
- **Over 90 per cent** of the respondents agreed that the course had given them tips and tools that they could apply in their work.
- In another follow-up survey conducted two months after the training course, **77 per cent** of respondents answered that they felt more confident in their work after the course. Added to that, **67 per cent** answered that the course had given them new insights and ways of understanding water.

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This report does not include annexes for privacy reasons.

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INTRODUCTION

The water community has identified communication as one of its greatest

challenges. Increasing awareness of water and its value, function, and relationship to other issues, such as climate change, could help motivate policymakers and the public to make better decisions about water. But that is not possible without effective communication.

This is where the World Water Week Communication Initiative comes into the picture, with the aim to improve the quality, accuracy, and intensity of reporting and storytelling on water. In 2021, the Grundfos Foundation was the project's founding lead partner, the programme was also supported by outreach partners water.org and Global Citizen, during World Water Week

THE COMMUNICATION INITIATIVE

The Communication Initiative was a pilot programme mainly consisting of two parts: free online workshop training for journalists and communicators, and the Communication & Behaviour Change Accelerator featuring as an integral part of the Centre Stage programme at World Water Week.

Training course before World Water Week

The free online training course for journalists and communicators was launched, for the first time, in May 2021. It was made up by a series of workshops with one track specifically designed for journalists (mainly from the low- and middle-income countries) and one track for communicators (mainly from the water sector).

The target audience was set at 15 journalists and 15 communicators. These numbers were reached by a wide margin. **A total of 195 communicators and 46 journalists signed up to the programme.**

In the follow up survey, **96 per cent strongly agreed or somewhat agreed, that the training course would “help them communicate more powerfully about the world’s water problems”.**

The Communication & Behaviour Change Accelerator at World Water Week

The Communication & Behaviour Change Accelerator was a programme of events at World Water Week designed to provide insights on the need and necessity for improved communication on water, and how this can be achieved. The programme comprised of presentations and panel discussions and was broadcast over five days on the Centre Stage at World Water Week.

Added to these sessions, was a separate set of five programmes called “More than words”. The More than words segments showcased different ways of how issues related to water and climate, can be communicated. The programme featured a variety of artists, musicians, storytellers, writers, and photographers.

Altogether, 1,758 attended the Accelerator sessions on Centre Stage during World Water Week.

THE COMMUNICATION INITIATIVE AS A WHOLE – A BACKGROUND

Boosting inclusive decision-making on water is an integral part of World Water Week's purpose, but it is not possible without effective communication that reaches beyond the water community.

However, communicating about water and climate issues is complex and nuanced. There is also a lack of understanding about water – its value, functions, and relationship to the climate emergency.

The World Water Week Communication Initiative was developed as a pilot project in response to the communication challenges faced by the water sector. The aim was to improve communication, reporting and the general awareness about water-related issues globally, not least in developing countries. The programme was based on the

principle that improved communication on water will ensure that the urgency of water issues reaches audiences beyond the water community.

The Communication Initiative also aspired to help illustrate the interconnectivity of water in relation to climate change and its importance to the achievement of all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The programme should be seen as a means to deepen the dialogue within, and outside, the water community, to get conversations started and actions initiated.

Due to the pandemic, World Water Week 2021 was held digitally, which gave the new pilot a huge potential in terms of democratisation of outreach.

OVERARCHING OBJECTIVES

The World Water Week Communication Initiative strived to promote the understanding of the role of water by:

- **broadening and improving** the quality, accuracy, and intensity of media reporting on water.
- building capacity and communication skills of communicators in the water sector.
- **increasing the understanding** of water's value and its centrality to achieve all the SDGs.
- helping to illustrate the interconnectivity of water in relation to climate change.
- indirectly influencing key decision and policy makers to take water-wise action on water.

OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

The World Water Week Communication Initiative consisted of two main parts:

1. **a series of free training workshops** combined with networking opportunities for journalists and communicators, in advance and during World Water Week
2. **the Communication & Behaviour Change Accelerator**, a programme designed to give the water sector the knowledge and skills it needs to reach a wider audience and empower people to make better decisions about water.

Training course in water and communication – before World Water Week

Initially called “the Engagement Programme”, the training programme was a series of online workshops on water and communication to support and inspire journalists and communicators to help raise the importance of water globally.

The **target** was set at: **15** communicators and **15** journalists, from mainly (but not only) low- and middle-income countries. The goal was also to reach a representation of **33** per cent **women**, and **33** per cent **young professionals** (under 35 years old.)

In addition to being the lead partner, the Grundfos Foundation contributed to the agenda by suggesting speakers for the programme. Kim Nøhr Skibsted, Executive Director of the Grundfos Foundation also gave an inspirational and personal lecture on the topic: *Water and the SDGs*.

The online training course started on May 18, with one track tailored for journalist and one track tailored for communicators. Altogether the participants attended 10 hrs of training over a period of four weeks.

To enable the use of breakout rooms for group discussions, and to give the participants a chance to ask questions to the speakers, the online workshops were broadcast live.

Every week, YouTube links were sent out to participants to facilitate viewing after the live event. This to make sure registrants in different time zones could take part in the training.

Some sessions on more general topics such as *Water and the 2030 Agenda* and *Water explained, an introduction to the complex issue of water* were joint lectures for journalists and communicators. However, most sessions were specifically designed for journalists to enhance their knowledge on various water issues, or for communicators to build their communication skills.

For a full schedule of the online workshop programmes see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

One last session was given just before World Water Week to familiarise the registrants with the platform used for the conference and to highlight certain parts of the World Water Week programme.

Targets reached, surveys and conclusions

The **targets** for number of participants were **met with a wide margin**, except for reaching communicators from developing countries.

COMMUNICATORS	TARGET	OUTCOME
Registrants	15	195
Gender	>33% women	69% women
Geographic spread	>50% from developing countries	39% from developing countries
Age	>33% under 35 years old	50% under 35 years old

When signing up, most communicators rated their level of water knowledge as basic or intermediate. More than half of them had never visited World Water Week.

As their foremost communication challenge, they'd listed "trying to find the right outreach channels" or "trying to get through the news buzz". The reasons given for signing up was to enhance their communication skills and improve their water knowledge.

JOURNALISTS	TARGET	OUTCOME
Registrants	15	46
Gender	>33% women	37% women
Geographic spread	>50% from developing countries	87% from developing countries
Age	>33% under 35 years old	59% under 35 years old

Only six out of 46 journalists noted their water knowledge as "advanced" when signing up to the programme, the rest rated their knowledge as basic or intermediate. Half of the registrant had reported on World Water week in previous years.

Out of 46 registrants, 20 joined the programme to "learn more about how water is interlinked to various development issues". The journalists deemed access to information and decision makers, as well as coming up with ideas, as equally challenging when reporting on water.

The **highest number** of participants in any session was **131**, and the lowest number was 36.

As of September 2021, the online workshops had a combined viewership on YouTube of 760.

A **survey** conducted after the last workshop in June indicated that the online training course had **met its overall targets**.

- **Over 90 per cent** of the respondents strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that the course would help them to communicate more powerfully about the world's water.
- **Over 90 per cent** of the respondents strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that the course had been relevant and applicable to their work.
- **Over 90 per cent** of the respondents strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that the course had given them tips and tools that they could apply in their work.

Opportunities for improvement lies mainly with the networking element of the training, and more practical work for participants.

In the **follow-up survey** conducted two months after the training course, **77 per cent** of the respondents answered that they **felt more confident in their work after the course**. Added to that, **67 per cent** answered that the course had **given them new insights and ways of understanding water**, as well as tools to better present their message.

Conclusions:

- The need and interest for training on communication and water is **very high**.
- **Many communicators work in silos**, having little knowledge of water issues beyond their own domain. The diverse themes covered in the training programme was much appreciated.
- The global reach allowed for communicators and journalists to **share experience and knowledge** with each other, and for speakers from around the world to be engaged in the schedule. The course provided a platform for registrants to reach experts and colleagues around the world.
- You Tube links were sent out to enable post-viewing for all participants. Looking into the future, **live broadcast in more time zones** should perhaps be taken into consideration.

Certificates were issued to those students who had concluded the course and sent in a special request.

Registration for the course was open during the month of April. **Post-registration** opened shortly after the training workshop closed on June 9. As of 21 September 2021, **almost 80 new learners** had signed up with the programme, making use of the post-registration form.

- **Targeted outreach** to communicators from low- and middle-income countries, could be key in reaching an even broader representation.
- **A second level for more advanced studies** would allow for more advanced participants to take part in the training.
- **More interactive training sessions**, speed dating between communicators and journalists, and/or more moderated discussions in small groups, could be developed looking at the programme post its pilot phase.

For the full survey see Appendix 3 and Appendix 3.1 for the free commentary field of Q12 and Q13

For the full follow-up survey see Appendix 4 and Appendix 4.1 for the free commentary field of Q3 and Q7

Capacity building (in communications) and collaboration events for the World Water Week convenors and participants

This part of the Communication Initiative was merged into other programmes, such as the Convenor Success Programme leading up to World

Water Week. The implementation was carried out by another team/consultant.



The Communications & Behaviour Change Accelerator at World Water Week

The Accelerators (a total of two in 2021) were new components forming part of the World Water Week curated conference programme. The aim of the Communications & Behaviour Accelerator was to highlight the importance of effective communication on water issues and provide practical advice and good examples on how to improve communication and thereby ultimately drive change.

Sessions were intended to offer examples of best practice in communication and provide tangible takeaways to enable participants to communicate in ways more likely to drive lasting change.

One of the targets set for the Communications & Behaviour Change Accelerator was to help audiences understand why and how water is relevant/important to them. Another aim was to reach beyond the water community and illustrate

the interconnectivity of water, in relation to climate change and its importance to the achievement of all the SDGs.

The Communications & Behaviour Change Accelerator was to help ramp up World Water Week ambitions to move it from a conference for water professionals, to a conference about water, for professionals (as part of a broader “Centre Stage” concept).

All sessions were broadcast on the Centre Stage, curated by World Water Week with support from relevant partners. The programme was set to run over several days, broadcasting 10-15 hours of content. The programme for Centre Stage morphed over time and in the end five unique episodes, each with an introductory speaker and a selected panel, was recorded and broadcast on Centre Stage.

Five themes were highlighted by the Communication & Behaviour Change Accelerator:

Monday | Why is effective communication important for water?

Main discussion points:

- How do we improve communication about the complexity and importance of water?
- What water-stories need to be told, to reach a broader audience.
- What target groups are most important to reach.

Tuesday | Awareness building and agenda setting.

Main discussion points:

- Ways and communication tools how to make people care about water.
- How do we make sure all voices are heard.
- Challenges when creating awareness and how they can be met.

Wednesday | Changing engrained behaviour and established narratives.

Main discussion points:

- Challenges in changing social norms.
- Driving forces for people to change behaviour.
- Best tips how to encourage behaviour change.

Thursday | Water as a solution, demonstrating value and building support.

Main discussion points:

- The delicate balance to communicate to people the urgency to action.
- Trends in reporting on water and climate issues.
- How to frame water as a solution.

Friday | Scaling up and community building.

Main discussion points:

- Main challenges when scaling up a project or an initiative.
- The importance to engage the targeted communities when scaling up.
- Strategies to reach different audiences and stakeholders.

For the full programme of the Communication & Behaviour Change Accelerator on Centre Stage see Appendix 5.

Each episode was broadcast in the morning (European time) with a repeat late afternoon (European time).

The number of **attendants was over-all high** and the very first session: *Why is effective communication important for water?* scored the **third highest**

number of attendants during the **entire World Water Week**. The only programmes that had higher viewership were the Opening and the Closing plenaries.

A **total of 1,192 viewers** participated in sessions on the conference platform.

As per September 27, there had been an **additional 1,748** views on YouTube.

For a breakdown of the number of views per session see Appendix 6.

Lead partner, the Grundfos Foundation, contributed to the agenda by recommending several speakers and organizations that participated in the panels. Added to that Kim Nøhr Skibsted, Executive Director Grundfos Foundation and Pia Yasuko Rask, Senior Director of SafeWater, Grundfos participated in three panel discussions. Water.org, another partner to the Communication Initiative, also participated in one panel discussion.

To better understand the concerns and interests of the participants, **customized polls** were taken each day during the live broadcast. Looking at the over-arching theme: Why is it so hard to communicate about water, **24 out of the 50** respondents concluded that the **complexity of the issue**, and the **difficulties in making science and technology easy to understand**, are the main challenges when communicating about water.

For the full result of the polls taken see Appendix 7.

In addition to these theme-based sessions the Communication & Behaviour Change Accelerator hosted a series called **More than words**.

Participants from the training workshops as well as artists from around the world, were invited to showcase examples of different – and efficient – ways of communicating water and climate change.

The Communication & Behaviour Change Accelerator aired four **half-hour-long** productions of *More than words* (and one repeat). Included in the programme was: an under-water orchestra, an informative piece of storytelling from the European Science Communication Institute, a photo documentary by photo-journalist Paul Hansen and a reading by author Patricia Schonstein.

For the full programme of *More than words* see Appendix 8.

A total of **566 World Water Week attendees** participated in *More than words* on the World Water Week conference platform. As per September 27, there had been an **additional 802** views on YouTube.

The entire content of the Communication & Behaviour Change Accelerator had, by end of September 2021, more than **4,300 viewers**, when combining the World Water Week viewership and YouTube.

Conclusions:

- Looking at the number of attendees for each session, the interest in communication is very high.
- The participants were, at many times active on the chat, sharing information and exchanging contacts, as well as voting in the polls set up for each day's theme.
- Looking at representation: **four out of five keynote speakers were women**. As for gender balance on the panels: **13 out of 20 panelists were women**. However, the geographical spread of the panelists was more of a challenge, 13 out of 20 panelists were from the US or Europe.

CONVENOR SESSIONS CONNECTED TO THE ACCELERATOR

At an early stage, it was decided that the Accelerators would feature in different parts of the programme and session organizers were encouraged to draw on them. All in all, 42 sessions self-identified as “Communication & Behaviour Change Accelerator”. To gauge the way the session convenors approached the topic of communication, young rapporteurs covered 10 of these sessions.

Conclusions:

- Many, but not all, convenors and speakers cited communication as a driver for change.
- Though these sessions were intended to focus on practical ways to improve communication about water, the subject of communication did not necessarily feature in these sessions to the extent that may have been expected. This also illustrates that communicating about water and climate change is quite new and unformed as a topic and can thus be developed further.
- A broader challenge in understanding the pivotal role of communication leaves an immense opportunity for skills development, not only for communicators, but for all who are in some way working with communication, dissemination, outreach, and opinion making.

OUTREACH AND MARKETING OF THE PROGRAMMES

Due to the pandemic, World Water Week 2021 was held digitally. This was a huge benefit to the Communication Initiative in terms democratisation of outreach.

Outreach and invitations targeting communicators

- A newsletter with an invitation was sent out through the World Water Week convenor network.
- A newsletter and an invitation to join the workshop, was circulated via the UN Water’s communicator emailing list called “Pipe”.
- Information about the training workshops was posted on SIWI social media channels: Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.
- The workshops were also highlighted in a SIWI newsletter, beginning of April.
- A Trello board with marketing material was sent to partners.

Outreach and invitations targeting journalists

- A newsletter/press release with an invitation to join the workshops was dispersed via SIWI’s media list.
- A newsletter/press release with an invitation to join the workshops was sent out via the WWW Journalist Grant emailing list.
- Journalist networks such as Fojo (Swedish educational organization for journalists) agreed to spread the word in their networks in Bangladesh, Rwanda and Kenya.
- Journalists covering water and climate issues were targeted directly.
- Information about the training workshops were posted on SIWI social media channels: Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.
- The workshops were also highlighted in a SIWI newsletter, beginning of April.
- A Trello board with marketing material was sent to partners.

Conclusions:

- Not surprisingly, it was easier to reach communicators than journalists, most likely because most communicators who signed up were engaged in the water sector and some could maybe even attend the course during work hours.
- The number of registrants far exceeded the targets. Looking at the communicator specific programme, 13 times more participants signed up than was expected as per the programme's KPI.
- Communicators were mainly reached via the newsletters (67), and to a far less extent via social media (10). However, the majority of the communicators didn't specify how they got to know about the training.
- Looking at the journalists, many were reached through the various journalist networks, not least the Fojo-network in Bangladesh. Out of the 46 journalists registered, 12 were Bangladeshi. Journalists mainly found out about the programme via social media (19) and the newsletters (17).

Outreach and marketing of the Communication & Behaviour Change Accelerator

Marketing of the Communicator & Behaviour Change Accelerator was mainly done via social media and email campaigns.

For a comprehensive report see Appendix 9 authored by Marketing Consultant Amanda Monfrooe.



OVERALL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROGRAMMES

- There is a **strong interest, and need, to increase the awareness and improve the communication about water** beyond the water sector. However, to raise the knowledge of the public and help motivate policymakers to take water-wise decisions, more accurate communication and reporting on water is needed.
- Many communicators still find it difficult to convey, in an easily digestible way, such a complex issue as water. Hence, **more training in science communication is desirable**. Be it to learn useful tools needed to simplify complex facts and issues, or how to engage communities and gain their trust.
- In the panel discussions on Centre Stage one recurring point raised was the **need for more stories on solutions**, and on the crucial role water plays as a mitigator to the climate crisis.
- To get this message through, we need a **more informed and more knowledgeable media**. It is vitally important to educate journalists on the complexity of the issue so that they can make correct linkages between water and the SDGs, and water and climate change. This could lead to more accurate and varied reporting on water.
- Though water forms part of the climate discussion, it still hasn't got the prominent role it should have. Therefore, **raising the knowledge and the awareness** of the essential part that water plays for our survival, is still a key challenge for the water community. In an interview leading up to World Water Week, Kim Nøhr Skibsted, Executive Director of the Grundfos Foundation put it simply: **we need to talk more about water**.