

4.11 MEDIA LIAISON AND MANAGEMENT

'It seems clear to me in that context, that as government we have not done really what we ought to have been doing more effectively, which is to communicate about what the government is doing and thinking. I think the message has come across very strongly, that this has been a very serious failure on the part of the Government. Clearly, it is something that we need to correct.' – President Thabo Mbeki addressing the Cabinet/SANEF Indaba held at Sun City, North West on 30 June 2001.

ADDENDUM ONE

6.1 Generic Key Performance Areas for HOCs

The Cabinet approved the introduction of measures to allow the GCIS to monitor and co-ordinate government communication more effectively and ensure implementation of the overall government's communication strategy.

These measures include the introduction of generic key performance areas for HOC, which are aimed at enhancing the co-ordination and integration of government communication.

This follows the resolution taken at a GCF to the effect that GCIS should be more involved in the processes aimed at improving government communications.

This initiative should enable the GCIS to improve government communication for better co-ordination and integration of messages, campaigns and programmes. The Key Performance Areas outline the generic functions of the HoC in a Ministry and department. This empowers the HoC to be actively involved in the strategic decision-making machinery of their respective departments in terms of creating a new consciousness and appreciation of communication as a tool for service delivery.

Functions of HoCs:

Cabinet approved that communicators should fulfil their obligations towards the co-ordination of government-wide communication by adhering to mechanisms that have been established to fulfil this objective. A HoC shall, among others:

- Submit departmental communication strategies and programmes developed in line with the overall government strategy within two weeks of Cabinet approval to the GCIS
- Participate and contribute to the programme of communication clusters, GCF, meetings for HoCs and MLOs to plan for post-Cabinet briefings, Pre-Cabinet meetings, training fora, Government Communicators' Extranet, submission of news releases and diary information to *BuaNews* Online and *Bua* Magazine, and development of communication strategies for clusters
- Ensure quality of the work of the MLO, with specific reference to the following:
 - (i) Responsiveness to media enquiries, i.e. respond to all enquiries and issue media statements, opinion pieces and feature articles

- (ii) Maintaining a healthy relationship with the media, including the Press Gallery Association
- (iii) Develop deliberate strategies to keep the foreign press corps informed of the department's work and approaches to issues
- (iv) Ensure that there are clear plans for each campaign and that such are linked to the GCS.
- (v) Ensure professional and strategic presentations for Media Briefing Weeks
- (vi) Contribute to the Cabinet Memoranda, in particular the item on communications implications
- (vii) Communicate with the GCIS the plans and outcomes of exchange programmes with other countries
- (viii) Improve proficiency and maintain quality standards in so far as adhering to the basic fundamentals of communication management, such as:-
- (aa) managing advertising and other agencies that do communication work for the department;
- (bb) ensure strategic planning around main communication events such as Budget Vote; national and international ays; any other main campaigns and events aligned to the department;
- (cc) proactive communication activities for the Minister and department;
- (dd) ensuring cost effectiveness in the use of resources;
- (ee) strategic management, monitoring and evaluation of campaigns;
- (ff) manage the distribution of publications and materials to reach target audiences, including through the IRC, GICs and MPCCs
- (gg) build capacity for the communication division by implementing training programs.

Assessment of Key Performance Areas

The Minister and/or Director-General will conduct regular assessments of a HoC, or any other senior official delegated by them as per the Public Service Regulations. The "assessing authority" will also consult the GCIS on its views regarding the performance of the HoC, especially on matters pertaining to his/her contribution within the government communication system as a whole. The form of such consultation will be worked out between the GCIS and the Ministry/Department concerned.

ADDENDUM TWO

6.2 IMBIZO MANUAL

During 2000, the Cabinet decided that *Imbizo* as a style of interactive governance and communication should be adopted to promote increased dialogue between the government and people without mediation.

Imbizo promotes active involvement and participation of the public in the implementation of government programmes. This should happen as the norm of government operation on a continuous basis, but there will be certain periods of intensified public participation across government reflected by Cabinet members, Premiers, Mayors and other senior government officials coming into active contact with different sectors of society. These shall be the *Imbizo* Focus Weeks.

Imbizo is therefore aimed at building a partnership between government and the South African public in the process of social change. In the spirit of partnership between the government and the communities, attempts may be made to identify stakeholders and/or individuals within communities who are actively involved in projects that have a positive impact on community development. For example, representatives of business, church, labour, youth, women and any other sector of society. Provincial Outreach programmes where the Executive Council meets the people from one region to the next are a reflection of *Imbizo*.

The President has set aside 2-3 days in his diary three times a year to give concrete expression to the *Imbizo* Programme through visits to provinces.

The aim is to give people an opportunity to raise issues about the programmes of government. This would, in the main, ensure that government listens to and notes the issues raised and ensures adequate follow-up with responsible departments and bodies and where possible responds immediately, if action has already been committed or taken. Where it is not possible to respond immediately the government has to commit itself to get back and respond at a particular time frame.

The national communication strategy envisages the *Imbizo* Focus Weeks will happen twice a year, once following the President's announcement of the government's Programme of Action in the SONA and after the Budget Speech and once towards the end of the year.

The central characteristic of these activities and events will be direct interaction with the people to receive feed back on programmes that are already being undertaken and to highlight to the people what government is and will be doing that year to improve the quality of their lives.

Each Focus Week will be given coherence in content and communication through the use of publicity material produced by the GCIS and the Department of Finance, which communicates the Programme of Action for the year and the Budget that will underpin its implementation. The core message for the year, e.g. Building a People's Contract for a Better South Africa and a Better World, will be prominent and visible throughout.

The President's participation raises the profile of this style of governance and sets an example to the whole government.

Imbizo can be undertaken over a few days or just in one day depending on the content of the programme that has been agreed.

Below is a set of guidelines to ensure that any government sphere or department wishing to undertake *Imbizo* does so honouring the spirit and letter of the general principles.

These guidelines will cover the following essential areas of *Imbizo*:

- o Interaction with the people

- o Media liaison
- o Publicity
- o Follow up on issues raised

3. Guidelines for undertaking *Imbizo*

3.1. Strategising for *Imbizo* Communication

An *Imbizo* Communication Programme has to be based on a defined communication strategy. The strategy must clearly outline the objectives of undertaking such an *Imbizo* and must contain all the elements of the communication strategy as outlined in the generic framework for developing GCS'.

3.2. Implementing *Imbizo*

3.2.1. Planning

Effective planning is a critical aspect of any successful campaign. This embodies initial conceptualisation of how the whole *Imbizo* will take place, using the communication strategy as a guide. At this stage, the role players must be identified and the necessary steps and processes specified in a work breakdown structure and action plan.

An example of a work breakdown structure for the President's *Imbizo* in Limpopo is shown below. Underneath it is an Action Plan showing how the implementation will take place.

These should be used only as guides and a checklist as each specific *Imbizo* should dictate what steps and processes to follow.

EXAMPLE

Work Breakdown Structure for the Presidential *Imbizo* in Limpopo

It is important to put as much detail to the plan as possible so it can serve as a guide during tasks review meetings.

3.2.2. Establishing a Task Team

A Task Team should be established and charged with the overall responsibility of implementing the *Imbizo*. The Task Team should preferably consist of selected government communicators from the department, representatives from protocol and security; a senior person who will be the link with the provincial department of the Executive Council and others as may be deemed fit.

The significance of having communicators in the Task Team is that of ensuring that the communication objectives of the *Imbizo* are strictly maintained.

Protocol and security have to be taken on board at all times as their understanding of the *Imbizo* is crucial to its success. Neglecting to brief them thoroughly may result in the

failure of the *Imbizo*, as they are critical and responsible for the movements of the principal on the ground.

Personnel from the province are also important in the process of implementing *Imbizo*. Preferably, it has to be someone with direct access to the Premier or the entire Executive Council, the MEC in the province, depending on the nature of the *Imbizo*.

The Task Team must have a designated Project Leader who will oversee the overall work of the Task Team and also have direct and full access to all those who need to be consulted to sign off things and approve the programme.

3.2.2. Role clarification

Once the Task Team has been established the roles of the various role-players should be clarified to ensure a smooth implementation of the *Imbizo*. This must be as detailed as possible and should clearly indicate who will be responsible for which tasks.

3.2.3. Budget

The budget is another crucial aspect of implementing *Imbizo*. Sometimes the budget commitments will be shared between the national department and the province. When this is the case it must be made clear which aspects of the budgets are the responsibility of the province and which of the national government.

At times this is left hanging and often results in unnecessary debts and unhealthy relations.

3.2.4. Consultation with the province and local municipality

Most *Izimbizo* are conducted in a particular local area. It is important to observe all necessary protocol before pronouncing publicly the intention to undertake *Imbizo*.

Improper consultation can be a recipe for failure hence all parties must be consulted in advance about the *Imbizo*.

It is advisable that the task team should as much as possible station and operate from the province where the *Imbizo* will take place a few weeks before the event. This is critical as reports that are submitted by provincial officials about potential project sites to visit should be confirmed by actually visiting them.

3.2.5. Developing the *Imbizo* programme

The programme is the ultimate reflection of long hours of work putting things together. At a glance, the programme should confirm if what is being undertaken is *Imbizo* or not.

This means that the *Imbizo* programme should cater for the principal's interaction with the people, allocating enough time for people to express their concerns and issues. The projects to be visited should also relate to the developmental and service delivery programme of government.

Long before deciding what the programme should look like, the province should have been requested to submit ideas about possible projects and programmes, which can be visited by the President, Minister or Premier.

The Task Team should select suggestions that are closest to the objectives of the *Imbizo* as outlined in the communication strategy. For instance, in a rural and poverty stricken province, issues that should be prioritised by an *Imbizo* programme include:

- Water
- Roads
- Poverty Alleviation Initiatives
- Health facilities
- Electricity
- Housing
- Education programmes
- Agricultural initiatives
- Economy boosting initiatives

There may be other political or social ills that are high in the agenda of the province that may need to be addressed during the *Imbizo*. These may be problems of racism, high level of crime, or even witchcraft.

By making these considerations, the programme will be responding to the needs of the environment as outlined in the communication strategy.

The programme has to be approved before any commitments are made about it either to different stakeholders or to the media.

Once the programme is approved, a second version for the public has to be produced. This will then be handed to interested parties, especially the media. This version will not include details that are necessary for security and protocol purposes only.

3.2.6. Media Liaison

Media Liaison is critical to popularise *Imbizo* in order to relate to people the commitment government has in forming unity with the people for change.

A Media Liaison manager must be identified to be in charge of activities that relate to media liaison. Having too many people managing media liaison activities results in confusion about directives and often makes media people furious resulting in negative coverage of the *Imbizo*.

This person and his/her team will then be responsible for the development and implementation of an effective media liaison strategy and plan. The strategy and plan should entail among others:

- Briefings to the media
- Interviews
- Which media/journalists are to be targeted
- Opinion pieces
- Statement of key messages about the *Imbizo*

- Contents of the media kit

It is crucial that the media should be informed in time what the *Imbizo* is about – and this does not, at initial stages, have to be about details in the programme.

During some *Izimbizo*, it may be necessary to organise transport for the media to move from one venue to the next so that at all times they have access to the activities of the principal.

Another essential element of media liaison during *Imbizo* is to provide the facilities necessary for the media to do its work effectively. This may be an Internet Café where the media can file their stories. A briefing room should also be handy for when the need arises to give further briefings to the media.

3.2.7. Publicity

In order to reinforce the message, publicity material has to be developed, availed and widely distributed. The publicity material must relate to the programmes of government, reflecting on successes and challenges of service delivery.

To achieve maximum impact to *Imbizo* Focus Weeks, common publicity material is used. This is in the form of posters, pamphlets and leaflets. The GCIS is responsible for producing leaflets and posters for the SONA and the People's Guide to the Budget, which it makes available for *Imbizos*. Departments and provinces can produce other material of their own, as long as they will integrate the central message of government.

People are often not well informed of government activities and programmes through the mainstream media, hence the emphasis of publicity material during *Imbizos*.

3.2.8. Promotional material

Media statements, interviews and publicity material can be complemented by promotional material. These can be T-shirts, caps, backdrops, banners, etc. Again on these promotional material must prominently reflect the core message of the *Imbizo*.

3.2.9. Conducting research for *Imbizo*

Preliminary research: Research must be conducted on the given area where the *Imbizo* is planned to happen. This could either be on a province or on a particular community or village. In terms of quantitative data some of the service delivery indicators that could be used include statistics of:

- Electricity Grid connections
- Houses completed or under construction
- Water – people gaining access
- Healthcare – people gaining access
- Telephone lines – number of lines installed
- Education – Matriculation results or educator: learner ratio

The above statistics must be collected from 1994 – current to show trends of progress. This can in turn be used on publicity material for the *Imbizo*.

In terms of qualitative data, consideration must be given to issues on development in the specified area, languages spoken, natural resources, and communications milieu of the area.

Secondary research: In assisting the project team to make informed decisions on the development of the programme, it is necessary for information to be gathered from various service delivery departments on successes and challenges that face their service delivery programmes in the given area.

- It is important that information received from departments is verified by independent research, which may involve field visits or contacting people involved in the programmes etc.
- In processing the research consideration must be given to both the outputs and impact of service delivery.
- Research briefings must be written on each service delivery programme, whether it is building a school, construction of a clinic or the operations on a small holding. All research briefings must be in a format that is easily readable and succinct. It should ideally contain sections on background, success, status of the programme and challenges.
- It is important to keep the briefing notes clear and precise, because they can then be used and further processed by the MLO to be included into the press packs.

Assessment and follow-up research: This is crucial for an effective *Imbizo*, which will ultimately be measured by its follow-up in terms of action taken

- The researcher needs to identify and brief scribes for each event. Scribes must be fluent in both English and the prevalent language spoken at the area where the *Imbizo* takes place.
- Ideally scribes should come from the communications section, because they are more aware of the communications environment in which they will be documenting issues raised.
- A user-friendly form needs to be drawn up by the researcher for each scribe to complete when documenting issues raised by the people.
Hint: Copies should be made of the form and compiled into a booklet with a hardback cover and a plastic front cover. This is to help scribes document easily in rural areas.
- An example of the format of the form is attached as a guide (See page 46)
- All scribe notes need to be collected and collated into a follow-up report of all issues raised. Ideally, this should be in the form of a database, such as Access, or in a tabular form, which captures all the fields of the scribe form.
- A fortnight after the *Imbizo* visit, it may be necessary to visit the province to obtain their report back as well as discuss the development of a consolidated report.
- The consolidated report, which will also include timeframes of action required by responsible departments and bodies, should be presented to the principal, i.e. President, Deputy President, Premier, Minister, Mayor, Councillor, etc.
- The report must be communicated to the relevant responsible departments or bodies via the proper protocol channels, to ensure that action is taken and communicated to the affected province or area.

Together with other documentation and plans all research material and notes must be filed and used during the assessment and closure of the project for that particular *Imbizo* event.

3.2.9.2 During the *Imbizo*

So far we have dealt with plans and processes leading up to the *Imbizo*. During the *Imbizo* there are critical things that the task team has to be in charge of.

3.2.9.2. Recording proceedings

The task team has to allocate people who will be in charge of recording and documenting the issues that are raised by people, and the responses that are given by government officials.

This is critical for follow up. An *Imbizo* is not complete and successful if government does not follow up on issues and concerns raised by the people. In order to achieve this, detailed recording and documenting of proceedings is required.

People allocated to perform this task during the *Imbizo* should be fully dedicated to this and should not be distracted, as they need to capture everything. Audio-visual and radio recording should also be done to reinforce the recording process.

An important part of ensuring that things are well recorded and that people are able to raise their issues audibly is the need to avail communication facilities for this purpose. Thus, the team must ensure that there is an operational Public Address System and roving microphones for people to speak from.

Given the mobility nature of these sessions, it would be advisable to outsource the PA system from venue to venue. GCIS Broadcast Production may be requested to record the events that have a Development Communication element. These requests need to be made within a reasonable timeframe and the GCIS would provide its services depending on the availability of resources at that time. The recorded material should be transcribed and out of that material, a detailed report of the entire *Imbizo* should be the outcome. In the past only the principal's speeches were transcribed and copies of the material circulated to the provincial community radio stations.

3.2.9.3. Monitoring the programme

The Task Team should allocate members to all the venues where the *Imbizo* will be taking place, to ensure that things are organised as agreed. Any problems should be reported immediately to the Project Leader for alternative arrangements, if necessary.

The Project Leader should at all times be with the principal advising on proceedings and managing the time in the programme. Adherence to the time allocated in the programme is crucial as late arrival to the next destination can cause irritation and even shape the attitudes of people. Thus, it is critical to advise people about the actual and accurate venues to avoid situations where people wait for the principal in particular venues that are not part of the political principal's itinerary.

However, the Project Leader should be dynamic and flexible to deal with unforeseen circumstances. Continuous briefing of the Head of Protocol and Security is important to take them on board and consult them where the programme has to take a slight or drastic change.

If the *Imbizo* is happening over a few days each day the Task Team should meet at the end of that day's programme and assess the proceedings for that day as well as plan for the next day.

3.3. Post *Imbizo* tasks

The task team does not disband immediately after the last item on the programme of the *Imbizo*. There are issues to be dealt with after the *Imbizo*.

3.3.1. Evaluation of the *Imbizo*

The task team needs to make an evaluation of the *Imbizo* and critique where necessary for future improvements. The evaluation should be the first step towards writing a report about the *Imbizo*.

3.3.2. *Imbizo* report

The Task Team has to produce a report about the *Imbizo*, which is submitted to the management. The report should contain recommendations about how issues raised will be taken forward.

3.3.3. Follow-up

The Task Team should also set up a process by which issues that were raised during the *Imbizo* will be followed up. This may entail consulting relevant government structures that may not have been at the *Imbizo* but are the competent structures to respond to issues raised.

Formal contacts needs to be made with those structures through the political head or any such official appropriate to do so.

Continuous assessment of the follow up is required to ensure that indeed government is fulfilling its commitments. After a while it is advisable to return to the areas visited during the *Imbizo* to see if there have been changes. In certain instances, there is huge progress that can form the basis for a good media follow up.

4. Conclusion

The generic guidelines and checklists outlined in this document should be adhered to in order to conduct a successful *Imbizo*. It should, however, be borne in mind that *Imbizo* is not a public relations exercise, but a catalyst aimed at getting a sense of the needs of ordinary people themselves in order to better respond to improve the quality of life of all citizens.

Guidelines for effective scribing during an *Imbizo*