Report on feedback to Communication/Media event CSO pre-meeting SACOSAN IV

I am very happy to share the outcomes of the consultation with the communications/media team members that worked together in SACOSAN IV. I am borrowing words from my colleagues to describe the process, achievements and follow up actions and recommendations.

The team strongly felt that the message of SACOSAN IV need to be taken further to the grassroots, which can be done by holding local level meetings and disseminating and sharing the information. This way we will be able to percolate the message down to the communities and get their actions. The next important suggestion is to maintain the momentum. Often people go silent after a big event and any activity starts only before the next big event or on any special day. So we need to evolve ways to keep the momentum. What can be those ways we all need to ponder over it?

The members of the team are committed to the cause and can work for it. This is up to all of us how the FANSA utilizes our strength and abilities.

Success factors:

Right from beginning of organizing the SACOSAN IV,

1. Full cooperation of the Sri Lankan government

2. Collaboration of government agencies and the CSOs

3. A well organized agenda in advance

4. Several media conference prior to this event to make the media aware about the importance of this event and the sanitation issues in Sri Lanka and respective FANSA member countries

5. Participation of the journalists from the FANSA member countries and the media reporting from Sri Lanka

6. Online presence www.freshwateraction.net/sacosaniv

7. Strength of Center for Environmental Justice (the host) in media coordination

During the pre SACOSAN IV, the "media stunt" played an important role in reflecting the theme of the SACOSAN and most of the local media institutions had used the "toilet queue" as to mark SACOSAN IV, which is a big achievement from our side.

Apart from that, the banners and hoarding displayed by us and several other organizations, made an impact in bringing out the theme of SACOSAN in a very strategic way.

Better next time:

1. A bit more organized in terms of response of the participants to the instructions

2. A team making calls to key regional, national and international journalists and media outlets for broader coverage besides press releases

3. Required physical meeting of the team to develop communications/media strategy

4. Media stunt event could have been more innovative compared to Delhi event.

5. More preparatory time could have been given to “TV interview style” introduction to past SACOSANs and there was confusion in identifying the interviewees.

6. Photo opportunity may have been improved with someone working with the photographer to try different angles and arrangements. For example, having some of the more strikingly dressed CSO members at the front and focusing in on them. Because of lack of space, the extent of the queue was not visible.

Follow up on the SACOSAN IV achievements:

1. Fellowship to the journalist to keep a track of the progress on SACOSAN commitments through their writing articles and stories on the issue from time to time.

2. Media exchange workshops to maintain the momentum - there should not be long gap between the events as other engagements take priority then.

3. Regular updates to the media by the network with information on any development taking place

4. Continued leadership in the communications work with a committed working group (perhaps of the same folks involved in the media and communications work).

Recommendations:

The team could identify some activities and follow up milestone moments. For example, at the WSSCC Global Forum on Sanitation and Hygiene in Mumbai in October, it might be possible for the communications people (or journalists) to carry out of a review of the first six months of implementation of SACOSAN recommendations.

How do we keep the journalists engaged on tracking SACOSAN commitments? Could we work out a plan of engagement? WaterAid has recently established a regional journalist network for South Asia. Can we link these endeavors up?