



THE UNIVERSITY  
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CAVE HILL CAMPUS  
BARBADOS, WEST INDIES



# Communicating The Key Learning: A Crucial But Often Neglected Step Version 1

**An addendum to the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN)  
Socioeconomic Manual for Coral Reef Management**

Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (CERMES)  
The University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus  
Barbados  
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This addendum, *Communicating The Key Learning: A Crucial But Often Neglected Step Version 1*, is an update to the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN) Socioeconomic Manual for Coral Reef Management (Bunce et al. 2000). The addendum was developed by the Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (CERMES) at the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, Barbados – the regional SocMon node for the Caribbean – due to the recognized shortfall of the GCRMN SocMon Manual in emphasizing the importance of communicating the findings from socioeconomic monitoring and using them in decision-making in adaptive management, which is an aim of the monitoring process. Globally, other SocMon regions have also recognized this deficit in the GCRMN SocMon Manual and as a result have added A Key Learning and Communication step to SocMon trainings. The additional step can be developed further and adapted based on regional needs.

#### Technical advice and guidance

The Global SocMon initiative ([www.socmon.org](http://www.socmon.org)) can provide technical advice, guidance and share experiences on initiating SocMon. Contact Peter Edwards at [peter.edwards@noaa.gov](mailto:peter.edwards@noaa.gov) for further information.

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#### Comments and feedback

Comments on this addendum and feedback on how it has been applied would be appreciated. Please send to Maria Pena at [maria.pena@cavehill.uwi.edu](mailto:maria.pena@cavehill.uwi.edu).

#### Author affiliation and contact information

CERMES, The University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, St. Michael BB1100, Barbados.

[maria.pena@cavehill.uwi.edu](mailto:maria.pena@cavehill.uwi.edu)

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## Introduction

Despite the initiation of socioeconomic monitoring at numerous sites via the Global SocMon initiative, there is very little evidence of the use and uptake of Socio-economic Monitoring for Coastal Management (SocMon<sup>1</sup>) data in decision-making or for adapting management across SocMon regions. Recent research undertaken on SocMon Caribbean suggests that “there is even less evidence of socioeconomic data making it into policy discussions, despite the fact that SocMon final report documents were often shared with upper level management like department directors and deputy directors, parliamentary representatives and permanent secretaries” (Lohmann 2019). The best practice of incorporating socioeconomic monitoring into management activities while appreciated, is not reflected in coastal and marine resource management. The conversion of human dimensions data and information into recommendations and planning requires assistance from social scientists (Lohmann 2019). Informed decisions and learning-by-doing are crucial components of management effectiveness. SocMon provides the methodology and tools for collecting quantitative and qualitative human dimensions data which can guide decision and policy outcomes. Communicating such science-based information is an often a neglected step that is addressed by this addendum.

## Purpose

The purpose of this addendum is to add detailed information to the penultimate step of the SocMon implementation sequence that will help to solidify its completion and is significant to influencing the impact of SocMon data on decisions and policy. *Key Learning and Communication* should be one the ultimate aims of any socio-economic assessment or monitoring activity. *Key Learning and Communication* builds on the fourth SocMon step - *Final Data Analysis* - described in the GCRMN SocMon Manual (Bunce et al. 2000), and logically, *Decisions and Adaptive Management* (the final SocMon phase) are informed and supported by key learning and the communication of monitoring results. The distillation and sharing of key learning and the data and information gathered from socioeconomic assessment or monitoring activities should ensure and improve the uptake of such SocMon information and its use in decision-making and adapting coastal and marine resource management.

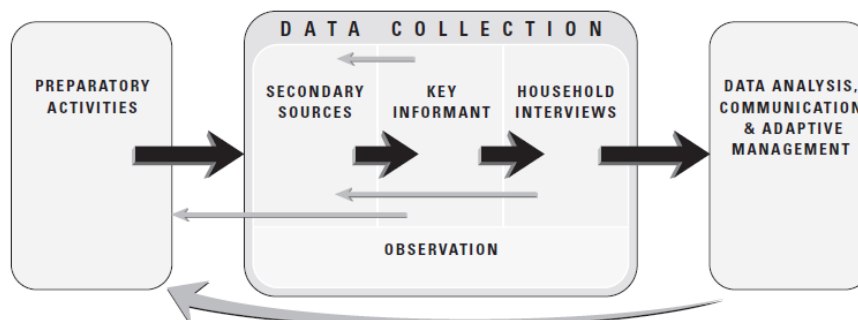


Figure 1 SocMon process (Bunce and Pomeroy 2003)

<sup>1</sup> SocMon is referred to as SEM-Pasifika in the Pacific Islands. Throughout this document SEM-Pasifika will be encompassed in the acronym, SocMon.

## Target readers

The priority audience for this addendum is SocMon trainers and practitioners. It is hoped that the information on this critical step to completing any SocMon assessment will be utilized in training workshops, in the development of socioeconomic monitoring plans and post-assessment for increasing the uptake and understanding socioeconomic data and information at the site level. The socioeconomic data and information compiled into key learning from monitoring need to be appropriately distilled by target audiences for informing management planning, decision-making and adaptive management. While mainly Caribbean perspectives are provided in this document, the guidance is applicable to the other tropical coastal regions implementing SocMon.

## Completing the SocMon process

SocMon is typically divided into four sequential steps or phases and is represented as such in the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN) Socioeconomic Manual for Coral Reef Management (SocMon Manual).

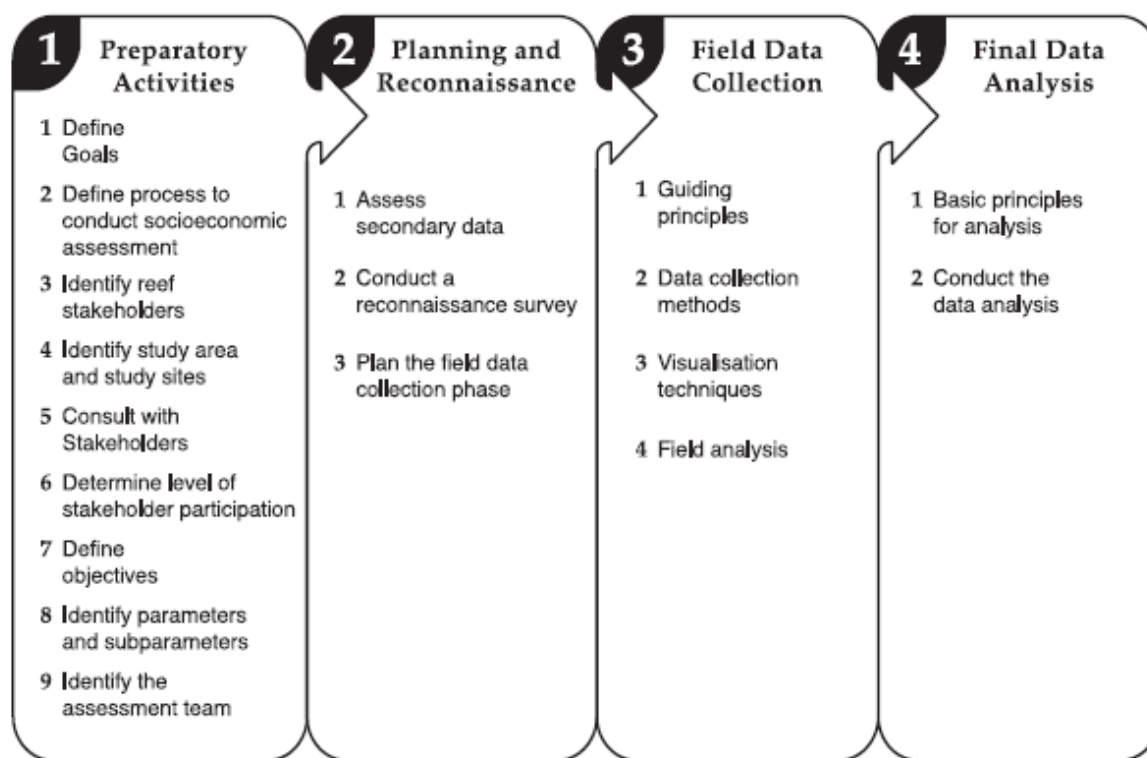


Figure 2 SocMon steps as outlined in the GCRMN SocMon manual (Bunce et al. 2000)

Key Learning and Communication was part of the original design of the SocMon methodology but we believe the importance of distilling and communicating monitoring findings requires greater emphasis to reinforce the purpose for conducting socioeconomic assessments in the

first place – that is, influencing and impacting management and decision outcomes<sup>2</sup>. In our experience, key learning and lessons learned from assessment and monitoring results are usually presented in the final site monitoring report (if at all), and many of those from whom data have been gathered are not aware of the results of the analysis. The site monitoring report is the main communication product or output produced at the end of a SocMon study which may not be the most impactful means of sharing and conveying the socioeconomic findings to diverse stakeholders, especially those that may have influence over or could affect the management of coastal resources. We have therefore deconstructed the original fourth SocMon step – Final Data Analysis – as described in the GCRMN SocMon Manual, into three Data Analysis and Validation, Key Learning and Communication, and Decisions and Adaptive Management in a deliberate attempt to highlight the importance of these two latter steps.



Figure 3 The six acknowledged steps to implementing a socio-economic assessment or monitoring program

## Limitations in communicating SocMon findings

The deficiency in, or lack of attention to, the development of a range of communication products subsequent to any SocMon assessment or monitoring activity is due to a number of challenges, which can include:

<sup>2</sup> Within regional SocMon guidelines, *communication* and *adaptation* are combined with *data analysis* as the sixth and final step of a socioeconomic monitoring program. In the SEM-Pasifika guidelines, *communicating results* and *use results for adaptive management* are included as individual steps in a socio-economic monitoring program.

- **Limited funding for the development of meaningful communication outputs.** Given the usually small sub-grants associated with conducting a SocMon assessment, ranging between USD 1,500 to 2,500, funding is typically limited to preparatory, planning and data collection activities. The development of communication products, other than a final assessment or monitoring report, very rarely can be adequately supported via project sub-grants. Additionally, most management authorities' budgets are limited with portions directed toward ecological monitoring and associated outputs. Socioeconomic monitoring still remains relatively sidelined and excluded from coastal management research frameworks and associated dedicated budgets, especially in the Caribbean. Lohmann (2019) notes that management authorities in the Caribbean "do not appropriate funds from the budget and allocate time in employee workplans toward socioeconomic programming." Hence, it can be challenging to source additional or matching funds for socioeconomic monitoring and its communication.
- **Overcommitted management authorities operating under capacity.** Most SocMon project partners are management authorities with responsibility for the management of coastal and marine resources. Often these agencies conduct numerous regional and local projects simultaneously but have inadequate human resources to devote for extended periods to any one project. In the Caribbean, generally management authorities have struggled with the initiation and implementation of SocMon at study sites. Limited capacity of project partners results in the regional SocMon node having to provide considerable guidance and assistance in data entry, analysis and reporting. The situation can be such that prolonged delays result in inadequate data analysis or brief reporting. Communication of results then may either be suspended until the project partner has the time to revisit analysis or may not be done at all.
- **Limited capacity or expertise in social sciences and communicating science.** The situation in the Caribbean (similar to other SocMon regions) is that most coastal and marine resource managers have academic and professional experience in the natural sciences (Lohmann in prep). Generally, such a foundation does not extend to science communication skills; few, if any, natural resource management authority managers and staff are exposed to training in communication in their academic or professional careers (McConney and Haynes 2011) - and not to training in or knowledge of the social sciences. Management authorities and agencies in the region are therefore limited in the type of information that is communicated to decision-makers, resource users and the general public. While a MPA marine biologist or fisheries officer may be better equipped with communicating the results of reef surveys to the general public, human dimensions information could be more difficult for him or her to convey based on their grounding discipline. Communicating socioeconomic data and information is made more challenging also given budget constraints of management agencies and authorities which rarely include posts dedicated to communication and outreach.
- **Lack of commitment and planning in sharing findings with participating communities and stakeholders.** Contrary to the culture and practice of SocMon, it seems as if

assessments implemented using SocMon by some partners in some regions may still have an extractive nature instead of participatory approach. If communities and stakeholders are engaged during the development and initiation of a SocMon assessment or monitoring programme, then it is expected they would want to be provided with the findings of such.

## Key learning

**Key learning** is fairly well covered in the GCRMN SocMon Manual and is reiterated here for emphasis. Key learning is discovered during the *Final Data Analysis* phase where it is refined for illustration and presentation, validation with stakeholders and inclusion into the final monitoring report.

*“Key learning refers to issues identified or lessons learned by the team [SocMon team] that are essential to the objectives of the assessment or are needed to understand the socioeconomic context of the stakeholders. In most cases, key learning will be identified by team members during informal discussions of their findings. By comparing what they have been told during interviews or what they have observed, the team can identify similar patterns and new insights relevant to the assessment goals and objectives” (Bunce et al. 2000, p. 157).*

Key learning can be:

- Information critical to assessment objectives.
- Conclusions about a particular variable (or indicator).
- A cross-cutting issue that draws on lessons-learned about several different variables.
- An issue or group of issues that are priorities for a significant proportion of stakeholders.
- A particular problem that most stakeholders agree is important.
- An activity, problem or issue that the team has identified as having a significant impact on coastal and marine resources and their users.
- A question that has not been answered and that may require further research.
- An important conclusion by the team on local conditions, local coastal and marine resource users and any other factors affecting socioeconomic aspects of coastal and marine resource use (adapted from Bunce et al. 2000, p 157).



*Box 1 Examples of key learning and their implications (Source: Socio-economic information for managing fisheries in the Negril Marine Park; Pena et al. 2007)*

### **Key learning from Negril, Jamaica**

***Negril Marine Park (NMP) communities believe they have limited influence on management of the marine park***

Communities must therefore be encouraged to participate in managing the Negril Marine Park. Fishermen need to be made aware of the fact that they have a key role to play in the management of marine resources and are necessary as partners in the management of the NMP.

***Fishing is the primary and secondary occupation of communities adjacent to the NMP with the majority of them dependent on fish as a major source of food***

Fishing may therefore be considered to be the mainstay of community livelihoods adjacent to the NMP. Full and part-time fisher families from communities in and around the NMP may be affected by possible restrictions on fishing and fishing effort within the NMP with the implementation of the FMP. Displacement of these fishers - who represent the poorest fishermen in Negril - due to management regulations, will have a significant impact on their income generation capabilities, household food security, nutrition and health. Additional deeper key learning raised the question of whether it would be ethical to prevent illegal spear-fishing in the NMP when the only gear affordable was being used.



In addition to key learning about the results of socioeconomic monitoring, SocMon teams and practitioners are also encouraged to provide key learning about the SocMon process for post-evaluation of the assessment or monitoring activity for improved future rounds of SocMon.

*Box 2 Examples of key learning about the SocMon process - compiled statements from Turks and Caicos SocMon training participants (Turks and Caicos SocMon 2013)*

### **Key learning from the SocMon process**

“The process of creating a questionnaire is far more scientific and requires much more preparatory work than we expected.”

“Translation of the questionnaire into language of the respondents requires time and relevant skills.”

“Survey questions and data entry require more consideration about formatting than originally expected because of variables.”

“Titles of key variables can have different and unexpected definitions.”

“Participation and response from interviewees can vary unexpectedly, including some not showing up.”



Key learning is usually presented at validation meetings subsequent to data analysis for confirmation among stakeholders. Key learning comprises important points to note and emphasize when sharing and disseminating assessment or monitoring results. They should therefore be included in communication outputs.

## Communication

There are numerous definitions of **communication** including:

- “The imparting or exchanging of information or news” – Google
- “The imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium” – Oxford Dictionary
- “A process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behaviour” – Merriam-Webster Dictionary
- “The act or an instance of communicating; the imparting or exchange of information, ideas or feelings” – Collins Dictionary

“**Science communication** is more complex than simply translating the jargon of science into language the public understands. Its complexity stems from the diversity and interconnectedness of its many elements, including the goals for communicating, the content being conveyed, the format in which it is presented, and the individuals and organizations involved. People approach science communication from their own starting points—a combination of expectations, knowledge, skills, beliefs, and values that are in turn shaped by broader social, political, and economic influences” (NASEM 2017, Ch. 2, p. 23). Although communicating science can be challenging, especially when there are limited skills or capacity for doing so, communicating about socioeconomic data and information collected by SocMon should not be neglected.

Communication is a critical facet of coastal and marine resource management but can be challenging given the diversity and complexity of natural resources. Diverse stakeholders of differing levels of education, knowledge bases, cultures, interests and ways of learning add to the communication challenge. As McConney and Haynes (2011, p. 178) state, “since we all communicate every day it is normal to think that communication is just plain common sense – but then we are surprised when our communication is not effective.” A good understanding of communication including the process of communication, barriers to effective communication and communication flows is important to communicating science, in this case social science, about use of and attitudes and perceptions to coastal and marine resources, interaction with and dependency on these resources, stakeholder participation in and perceptions of resource management etc.

**The Global SocMon Initiative** ([www.socmon.org](http://www.socmon.org)) recognizes the value of communicating about regional socioeconomic monitoring within each region and among them. Communication is considered to be so significant that it comprises one of six global SocMon strategic planning goals<sup>3</sup> – *Communicating to different stakeholders*. Its accompanying objective is to, “clearly communicate and share process, outcome and outputs successes to different stakeholders.” To achieve this strategic planning goal this will “require an adaptable, multifaceted and cutting edge communication approach.” Some of the proposed actions for achieving this strategic goal

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<sup>3</sup> Six global SocMon Strategic Planning Goals: Capacity development; Integrate comprehensive monitoring for decision-making; Designing improved monitoring; Sustainable financing; Networking for resource mobilization; and Communicating to different stakeholders.

are directly applicable to communicating site-specific socioeconomic monitoring findings (provided the necessary resources are available). These include:

- Developing targeted messages for identified key stakeholders. The focus of which would be on demonstrating the “what is in it for them” message regarding the use of socioeconomic information for management;
- Developing short informational videos with key messages, findings and results for use in multi-media applications; and
- Developing a variety of informational products tailored to specific audiences - for scientific and technical community versus lay persons and public officials. This should involve clear communication of the process, outcomes, outputs and successes (Edwards 2014).

The significance of communicating the findings and learning of any socioeconomic assessment must be repeatedly underscored as being critical to informing and adapting coastal and marine resource management. The current limitation or lack of communication in most cases about site-specific SocMon findings and learning needs to be addressed to improve the uptake of this type of data and information for adapting management, making decisions and influencing policy. The poor and inadequate sharing of socioeconomic information collected using SocMon undermines its value as a practical, flexible and robust methodology. Informative baseline data are being collected regionally that can be built on in future monitoring events to visualize changes in socioeconomic conditions that could positively impact coastal and marine management in the region (and globally). The growing trend to integrate ecological and human dimensions monitoring for a holistic approach to monitoring that is currently being led by SocMon Caribbean and SEM-Pasifika has the potential to transform the way coastal and marine resources are currently being managed (see Wongbusarkum and Heenan 2018). Effective, appropriate and targeted communication is key to highlighting the value of learning from socioeconomic data and information to improving and adapting management of coastal resources.

The communication and sharing of socioeconomic assessment results is often limited to the production of a report or giving a presentation via a meeting with the relevant stakeholder(s) of interest. This hasn't proven to be the most effective means of conveying SocMon results for use in decision-making and management. Lohmann's (2019) research has indicated that resource managers and practitioners note that merely “presenting information is not compelling or convincing when placed alongside competitive interests in front of decision-makers.” Alternative communication products and communication pathways could improve the accessibility and effectiveness of SocMon information in coastal and marine resource management.

SocMon practitioners require technical guidance on ways to improve communication and paths for directing the use and uptake of human dimensions data and information, as well as recommendations for management (Lohmann 2019). In the following section, we provide some suggestions compiled from online resources and communications colleagues that could help improve the communication of socioeconomic findings. The information provided is by no

means exhaustive and does not detail communication theories and models but instead provides basic guidance to SocMon practitioners. The information should assist in the self-guided or internal development of a communications plan for improving communication about SocMon assessment and monitoring results should funding be unavailable to engage a communications expert for information dissemination. The latter is preferable but may not be practical given project and organization funding constraints.

## Effective communication of SocMon results: Elements of a communications plan

A communications plan should be developed for every SocMon project from the very start during preparatory activities and planning phases rather than at the end. As Creech (2006, p.3) notes, “communications needs to be incorporated into the work plan and budget to ensure that research findings are not only published, but used.” Once the SocMon project is initiated, the communications plan should be implemented with other work plan activities and simultaneously carried out with assessment/monitoring activity itself. There are four main components to a communications plan:

- Developing communication goals and objectives
- Defining the target audience
- Identifying key communication messages
- Selecting appropriate communication products and pathways

Each of these elements is described in the following sections.

During SocMon training workshops (especially in the Caribbean), project partners develop a site monitoring plan (or proposal for monitoring) that includes a basic communications plan. See Figure 4 and CERMES (2018).

Target audience	Main message	Communication product + pathway

*Figure 4 Communications plan template provided in SocMon Caribbean trainings*

While it is recognised that the communications plan for a project should address both internal and external communications<sup>4</sup> (Creech 2006), the following sections focus on external communications which we consider to be most limited in SocMon projects. Three principal concepts of communications (both external and internal) should be kept in mind always:

- Direct engagement of target audiences as stakeholders, partners and strategic allies in the work being undertaken;
- Integrated use of communications media and channels to reach out to and engage the target and broader audiences; and
- Evaluation of the results of the communications plan, i.e. the uptake of messages and findings, and contribution towards achieving the desired outcomes of the SocMon project itself (Creech 2006).

When communicating about SocMon, keep the **goal-audience-message** framework in mind ([www.aaas.org](http://www.aaas.org)) or “Begin with the end in mind” (Haynes Consulting pers comm). We use this framework to outline some core steps for communicating about and sharing socioeconomic information collected during a SocMon assessment or monitoring programme.

### Developing communication goals and objectives

Similar to planning a SocMon assessment or monitoring programme, stakeholder engagement with science begins with a goal. Goals are broad and lack specific measurement. Goals for communication to engage stakeholders and the public may be long-term, including outcomes such as:

- fostering trust with specific individuals or stakeholders and between science and society,
- increasing stakeholder participation in and support for management,
- improving the use of socioeconomic data and information in decision-making, or
- increasing and improving scientific research, questions, plans, or agendas.

Associated with the communication goal(s) are objectives for communication. Similar to developing SocMon objectives, the communication objectives developed should be **SMART**. SMART criteria provide directions for measuring objectives that are **Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-related** (Table 1).

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<sup>4</sup> *Internal communications*: facilitating the interaction among collaborators on a given piece of work, who are also often beneficiaries of that work.

*External communications*: the means by which both progress on a piece of work and the results of that work are shared with stakeholders, target audiences and more broadly.

Source: Creech (2006).

Table 1 SMART objectives at a glance

<b>S</b> <b>Specific</b>	<i>The objectives should be as specific as possible, identifying who the objective is for, where it will take place, how, and how often it will be measured (the expectation of communication)</i>	<p>Think about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who to communicate with</li> <li>• What to communicate</li> <li>• Where and How to communicate</li> <li>• When to communicate and Why</li> <li>• Target stakeholders for each message type</li> <li>• Channels for each message</li> <li>• Timeframe for communication (weekly, monthly, annually)</li> </ul>
<b>M</b> <b>Measurable</b>	<i>Define how the objective will be measured based on consensus from management and stakeholders (quantifiable with clear indicator(s) of success)</i>	<p>Metrics may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Website traffic</li> <li>• Social media traffic</li> <li>• Number and types of stakeholders reached</li> <li>• Increased understanding of management problems or issues</li> </ul>
<b>A</b> <b>Attainable</b>	<i>The objectives should be attainable with existing capabilities, resources and budget</i>	<p>Assess the following for attainable objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current and future resource availability</li> <li>• Budget and budget flexibility</li> <li>• Existing skills and abilities</li> </ul>
<b>R</b> <b>Relevant</b>	<i>The objectives should be relevant to the SocMon project, the management authority, stakeholders and communication targets</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choose objectives that are relevant to the management authority and stakeholders.</li> <li>• The goal needs to measure something that stakeholders care about, if not it will merely be a symbolic goal</li> </ul>
<b>T</b> <b>Time-related</b>	<i>Objectives should have a fixed time-frame or deadline for measuring results</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specify when the results will be achieved</li> <li>• The time-frame must be realistic</li> </ul>

Adapted from Ause, R. September 12 2017.

<https://www.workamajig.com/blog/project-communication-plan-set-goals>

Principles of good communications objectives include:

1. They derive from the overall SocMon project objectives. The two key questions in this process are “what is our project trying to do?” and “how can our communications help do it?”



2. They focus not only on outputs - how many brochures, posters or pieces of media coverage are produced but also on outcomes, for example the behaviour or action the management authority or SocMon practitioner desires to see in stakeholders, decision-makers, funders etc..
3. They focus the activity, so there should not be too many of them, therefore prioritise them and limit them to a manageable number (e.g. three or four).
4. The more specific and measurable they are, the more focused and efficient the communications outputs and outcomes will be. (<https://www.health.org.uk/commskit>).

The communication objectives for the SocMon study should be based on the project's objectives and those that need communications input to succeed. Taking each one of the project objectives in turn, use the following checklist of cue questions to help draft the communication objectives.

	Cue question	Communications intent
<b>1</b>	Broadly, <b>what</b> will the communications need to do to deliver the SocMon objective(s)?	Raise awareness? Prompt action? Impart knowledge? Win support for management? Stimulate a want or desire?
<b>2</b>	<b>Who</b> will need to be engaged to achieve the SocMon objective(s)?	Be specific; avoid broad categories such as "public"
<b>3</b>	What will you want the target audience to think, know or do? (The answer to this question should take the three types of communication objectives and AIDA model in mind - Awareness, Acceptance and Action or engagement	Prompt knowledge, build understanding, gain recognition (Awareness) Join, visit, accept, participate, attend, disseminate, support, create information exchange (Action)  Change practice, change behaviour, attitudes or beliefs (Acceptance)
<b>4</b>	<b>How</b> will you know you have succeeded?	Think about the targets or indicators that can show the intent outlined above has been achieved.
<b>5</b>	Within what <b>timeframe</b> will this be done?	Create a deadline for communicate about SocMon findings.

Source: adapted from <https://www.health.org.uk/sites/default/files/Setting-communications-objectives.pdf>

Developing objectives is an iterative process, similar to developing SocMon objectives. At this stage, the objectives will be crafted in broad terms. As SocMon practitioners develop the details of the communication plan, it will become easier to be more specific about audiences, and targets to be met. Below are samples of communications objectives according to objective type that can be adapted for use. Fill in the blanks as needed.



## Sample Communication Objectives

### **Awareness**

"To have an effect on awareness; specifically to create \_\_\_\_\_ (knowledge / understanding) by \_\_\_\_\_% of \_\_\_\_\_ (targeted community, fishers, hoteliers etc.) about the (MPA, new management regulations, proposed development etc.) \_\_\_\_\_ within / by \_\_\_\_\_ (targeted date)"

### **Acceptance**

"To have an effect on acceptance; specifically to \_\_\_\_\_ (desired outcome i.e. regain trust/acceptance, improve relationships) among \_\_\_\_\_% of \_\_\_\_\_ (targeted community, stakeholder or user groups) \_\_\_\_\_ (organization is doing - i.e. acting responsibly, being transparent, honest, etc) by \_\_\_\_\_ (targeted date).

### **Action**

To have an effect on action; specifically to \_\_\_\_\_ (desired outcome i.e., increase participation in decision-making, positive opinion) by \_\_\_\_\_% of the \_\_\_\_\_ (targeted community, stakeholder group) within/by \_\_\_\_\_ (targeted date)

Source: adapted from <https://www.lauradunkley.com/site/blog/2015/11/20/communication-goals-and-objectives>

## Key points to note

Be realistic about what communications can achieve. This is especially relevant given project timelines and capacity of agencies and organizations conducting SocMon. Below are examples of what communications can assist with in human dimensions monitoring:

- Increase the intended audience's knowledge and awareness of a coastal and/or marine management issue, problem or solution.
- Increase the intended audience's awareness of a project, department or organization.
- Influence perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes that may change social norms.
- Prompt action.
- Demonstrate or illustrate skills or best practice.
- Reinforce knowledge, attitudes or behaviour.
- Show the benefit of behaviour change.
- Advocate a position on a resource management issue or policy.
- Increase demand or support for coastal and marine resource management.
- Refute myths and misconceptions.

(Adapted from <https://www.health.org.uk/sites/default/files/Setting-communications-objectives.pdf>)

## Defining the target audience

The audiences or key stakeholders - individuals, groups or institutions - with whom the SocMon data and information need to be communicated to must be clearly identified. McConney and Haynes (2011) caution that “the best audiences to target in order to achieve an objective may not always be the most obvious ones.” SocMon communication may be focused on audiences that are best-positioned to help the SocMon practitioner reach their goals. For instance, if the goal is to provide input to a decision, the target audience may be decision-makers themselves, or may also include the decision-maker’s constituents (e.g. voters in a community). There will be success in reaching the goal if the audience defined well. Consider audiences carefully and think about:

1. Who holds the keys to success or failure? and
2. Who influences those people?

([https://www.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxford/media\\_wysiwyg/Writing%20a%20communication%20strategy%20%2818.02.16%29.pdf](https://www.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxford/media_wysiwyg/Writing%20a%20communication%20strategy%20%2818.02.16%29.pdf))

Early identification of the target audience(s) will assist in determining who to collaborate with to achieve the goals, who to involve in the planning process, who to defend your messages against, and whose activities should be monitored for assessing the impact they could have on the project, decisions and management (McConney and Haynes 2011). This process is known as stakeholder analysis and is conducted using a stakeholder matrix to plot those persons, groups or institutions that are in positions of relative importance and have strong influence against their interests. Stakeholder analysis will help with development of a communication plan that is aligned to each stakeholder's focus and concerns. A good understanding of stakeholder interests, power and influence is critical to achieving communications goals and objectives.

Different methodologies suggest different ways of analyzing stakeholders - some complex and some quite simple. A common approach recommended here is to map the interest and power or influence of each stakeholder group on a grid. The grid arranges stakeholders on a two-by-two matrix where the features are the stakeholder’s interest (more so in a political sense vs. genuine curiosity) in the issue, natural resource, management authority etc., and the stakeholder’s power to affect or impact the future of the issue, resource, management authority etc. According to this power vs. interest matrix, there are four categories of stakeholders:

1. **Players** who have both an interest and significant power;
2. **Subjects** who have an interest but little power;
3. **Context setters** who have power but little direct interest; and
4. **The crowd** which consists of stakeholders with little interest or power (Bryson 1995).

In short, this matrix is your “Who needs what?” map. Once the stakeholders have been mapped, efforts should be focused on the highest priority groups while providing sufficient information to keep the less powerful groups satisfied. This information therefore informs the strategy for engaging the target audience/stakeholders.

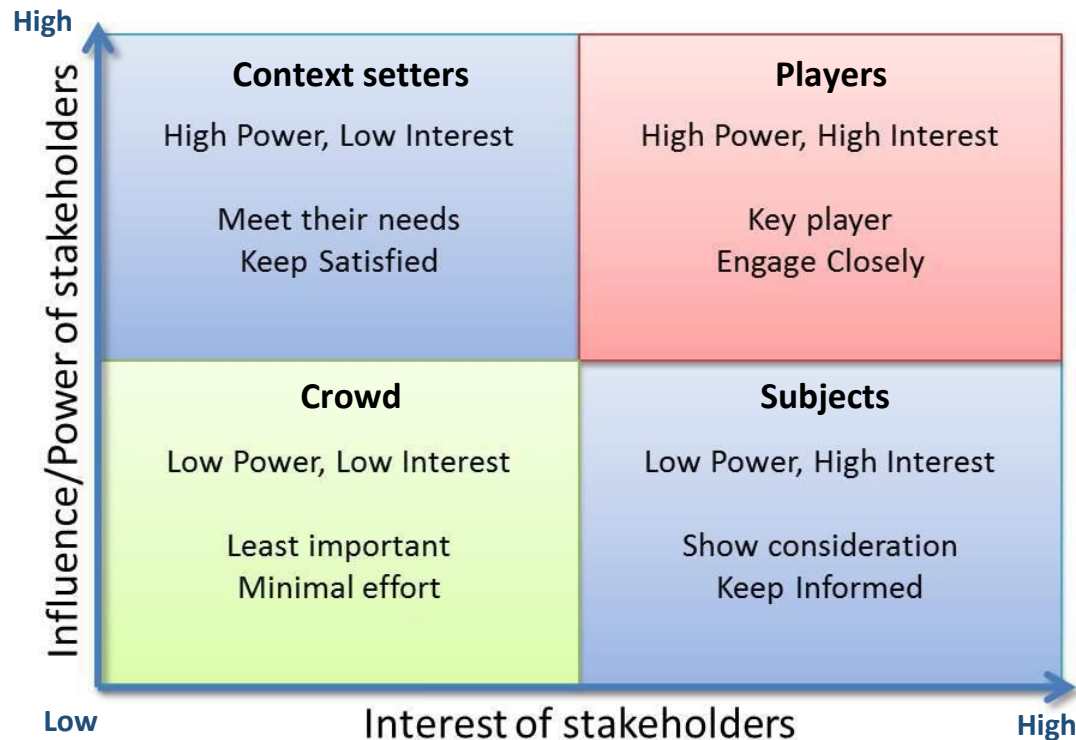


Figure 5 Stakeholder analysis: Power/influence-Interest Matrix

Source: adapted from <http://projectizing.co.uk/stakeholders-analysis-powerinfluence-interest-matrix/>

Creech (2006) advises moving beyond specifying the intent to influence for example, business, government and civil society and instead be specific in identifying representatives within government departments, companies and civil society organizations. Identify at least 10-20 key individuals whom you most want to use the findings of your research. This mirrors the SocMon preparatory activities phase in which primary and secondary stakeholders relevant to the goals and objectives for assessment or monitoring are identified, and from which a list of key informants is developed. Creech (2006) further advises that beyond the identification of specific individuals, focus should also be on specific positions within sectors e.g. Ministers or Permanent Secretaries responsible for policy development in specific departments.

### Identifying key communication messages

To borrow from Heath and Heath (2008) and their book *Made to Stick* about transforming the communication of ideas, the goal is to make the messages “stick” – this means the messages should be clearly understood and remembered, have a lasting impact – they change the audience’s opinions or behaviour. Heath and Heath (2008) evaluated a number of successful ideas and determined a set of common, logical traits or principles that made them “sticky.” All of which are applicable to communication messages. These include:

- **Simplicity:** Make the message(s) simple and clear. “To strip a [message] to its core, we must be masters of exclusion” (Heath and Heath 2008, p. 16).

- **Unexpectedness:** Grab their attention. Think about how you can get an audience to pay attention to your message and maintain their interest while needing time to get the message across. Heath and Heath (2008 p. 16) state that “we need to violate people’s expectations.” For a message to endure, interest and curiosity must be generated. People’s curiosity can be engaged over a long period of time by systematically opening gaps in their knowledge and then filling them (Heath and Heath 2008). McConney and Haynes (2011) suggest revealing information that is little known or poorly understood.
- **Concreteness:** Make the message(s) clear. Ideas must be explained in terms of human actions and sensory information. “Speaking concretely is the only way to ensure that [the message(s)] will mean the same thing to everyone in your audience” (Heath and Heath 2008, p. 17).
- **Credibility:** Make sure the message is delivered by a source the audience can believe or finds credible and is up to date with facts (McConney and Haynes 2011).
- **Emotions:** The message(s) must make people feel something in order to care about it.
- **Stories:** When possible tell stories to get people to act on your message(s). “Hearing stories acts as a kind of mental flight simulator, preparing us to respond more quickly and effectively” (Heath and Heath 2008, p. 18).

To guide you through the development of communication messages, craft more than one version of the message you wish to disseminate and score them against the six traits/principles above. A message may not have all of the “sticky” principles but one that has most of them, should be the one that would be the most impactful.

Remember to tailor your message(s) to your audience in terms of content and tone. Also be cognizant of the structure of the message. Typically, most SocMon practitioners are natural scientists and as such communicate in a precise manner. Scientific communication (e.g. a technical report) includes a lengthy background, and then describes the methods and process used with great precision. It is not until the very end of the document that results or conclusions are reported. Communicating to the public reverses this approach: making the bottom-line (or results) the lead (do not bury the lead), followed quickly by the “so what,” and then the supporting details, as appropriate (<https://www.aaas.org/resources/communication-toolkit>).

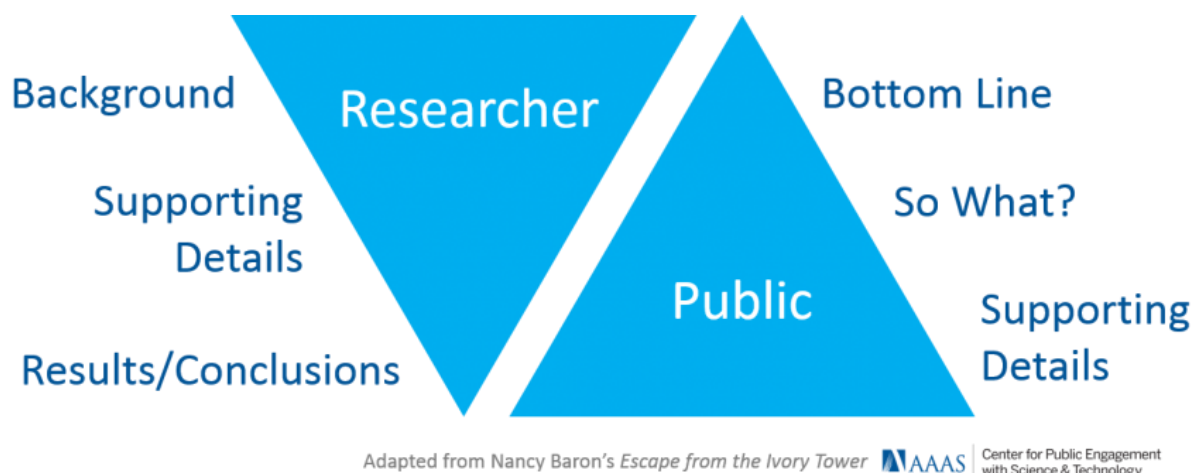


Figure 6 Scientific versus public communication styles

Source: <https://www.aaas.org/resources/communication-toolkit>

### Selecting appropriate communication products and pathways

Effective delivery of communication messages requires the determination of “the best product or container for the message, and the best pathway or channel for delivering the product” (McConney and Haynes 2011, p. 186). There are many types of communication products that can be developed given time, and human and financial resources are available. As mentioned previously, site monitoring reports and PowerPoint presentations have been typically used for communicating SocMon assessment or monitoring results globally. In some instances, executive summaries and policy briefs have been used. However, there is a real need to move beyond the conventional report and presentation products to a range or combination of products - print, electronic, audio/video – that will attract the attention of users (Creech 2006) and allow the packaging of SocMon data and information in a succinct, salient, relatable and visual manner (Lohmann in prep) for greater impact and uptake. Human dimensions report cards, infographics, story maps (maps with narrative text, images, and multimedia content), music videos, short documentaries or videos, infomercials, short stories, poetry, posters, signs etc. are a range of communication products that can be used to enhance the communication of SocMon results.

Just as there are numerous types of products for communications, there are as many channels or pathways by which the product and message may be delivered. The most suitable pathway for communicating the message is determined by a number of factors. Keep the following in mind:

- Costs associated with the delivery of the product.
- Accessibility to the chosen medium. For example, does the target audience have the internet, television etc.
- Ease of use. For instance, consider whether the target audience is internet-savvy.

- Credibility of the medium, i.e. is it a tabloid-type newspaper known for exaggerating the truth?
- Does the pathway encourage participation – is it a two-way pathway encouraging user interaction or feedback?
- Sustainability of the pathway. For example, does the chosen pathway facilitate long-term dissemination?
- Is the pathway consistent with your objectives – does it allow you to meet your communication goal (McConney and Haynes 2011)

Small group and interpersonal communication pathways may reach a smaller target audience but face-to-face and workshop or meeting settings are very powerful for delivery in interactive settings (McConney and Haynes 2011). McConney and Haynes (2011) provide a thorough list of varied communication pathways and their advantages and disadvantages for large audiences that can be used for disseminating messages (Table 2). The number of pathways chosen for sharing SocMon communication products and messages depends on financial resources for their accessibility (e.g. costs may be attached for placing articles in newspapers, producing radio jingles etc.) and human resources for their administration (blogs and social media platforms require frequent maintenance). Choose those that are the best fit for the project and overall communication objectives.

*Table 2 The pros and cons of some communication pathways for large audiences*

<b>Pathway</b>	<b>Pros- favour pathway</b>	<b>Cons – do not favour pathway</b>
Newspapers	Relatively inexpensive; graphics and tables feasible; longer shelf life than other mass media; can contain more information than other mass media	Limited readership; no guarantee that your message will be placed unless you pay; little control over where your message will be placed in the newspaper
Television	Reaches viewers when they are most attentive; can convey message with images, sound and motion; allows for greater creativity in delivering your message	Can be most expensive mass medium; not as easy or cheap to update or adapt messages as with other media; because audience is compartmentalized you might not reach all targets within the same time slot
Leaflets and pamphlets	Easy to print, easy to hand out; can be passed from one person to another easily; generally cost-effective	Easily disposable; might not be read if distributed with other informational material; needs literate audiences
Newsletters	Easy to start (desktop publishing); easy to deliver electronically and store for reference; creates regular contact with your stakeholder base	Content can be difficult to create on a regular basis; locked into a schedule for delivering information; more limited space than a newspaper for your articles
Radio	Most popular medium, especially in rural areas; can grab attention using a catchy jingle; cheaper to produce than other broadcast media messages; can be repeated	Little opportunity for retention by audience once the message is delivered; most popular slots can become full quickly; can be difficult to reach some audience members who do not normally

Pathway	Pros- favour pathway	Cons – do not favour pathway
	more often over a time period; call-in allows dialogue	listen to the radio
E-mail	Use anywhere once connected to the Internet; can send from a computer or any e-mail-enabled device; fast and cheap relative to other forms of direct contact; messages are easily stored, retrieved and can be mass-circulated	It can be difficult to convey emotions accurately; can be impersonal; not always a secure method of communication; can find its way into other hands than the intended recipient; requires technology
E-mail lists	Allows those focused on a particular area of interest to communicate with others of like mind; reaches a large number of people; creates a vast pool of people with varying depths of experience and knowledge	Lots of redundant messages; recipients bombarded with messages on topics in which they have no interest; recipients' mailboxes can become cluttered with e-mail; response time can be slow; only those who sign up can respond
Websites	Can be an interactive, entertaining; may host a variety of supporting media; can take advantage of links; popular among many audiences	Web hosting can be costly; requires specialized knowledge to create and update; updating can be time-consuming; active engagement necessary; needs technology
Internet chat rooms	In-depth discussion or debate can take place in real time between a group of people; can be a good pathway for bringing together like-minded people; means of refining and improving communication skills	Meetings need to be scheduled for specific times, not always convenient; many people might not be familiar with how Internet chat rooms work; difficult to verify the identity or authority of the person to whom you are speaking; can be time-consuming
Wiki technology (such as Wikipedia)	Allows for voluntary collaboration in creating online information; people with new knowledge on a subject can update or edit other people's entries to increase timeliness and accuracy	Edits can be made freely and without restriction; multiple authors can create conflicting goals with the information; Wiki entries can be vulnerable to corruption and destruction; fairly sophisticated audiences required
Blogs	Keep websites fresh with new content; easy to post new content; build a tight-knit community of interest among those who respond to a particular thread	Maintenance and moderating can be time-consuming; constant editorial oversight needed; require active participation for best results; technology required
Theatre and the arts	May be culturally most appropriate in some places; novelty can attract large audiences; may appeal more to children and young people	May seem culturally inappropriate; actors and production process can be expensive and time-consuming; may need facilities; time- and place-based unless broadcast
Corporate communications	Access to a specific customer base; not discarded as quickly as other print media; creates a brand identity for your organization	Can be expensive; requires planning well in advance; can become dated if your area is very dynamic; may be perceived as too self-promotional or biased

Source: McConney and Haynes (2011)

**Remember:** There are a number of communications messages and products that could be delivered throughout the SocMon assessment or monitoring activity. There is an abundance of communications toolkits available online that may be used for guidance. Do not wait to the end of the project to tell your target group and other audiences what you are working on. Share basic concepts, assumptions, and preliminary findings. Some useful approaches include:

- Announcing the start of the SocMon project to describe the purpose of the SocMon, its duration and expected outputs.
- Holding a multi-stakeholder inception and training workshop to inform stakeholders about the assessment or monitoring, develop the workplan and build buy-in to the project.
- Setting up a project Web page, Facebook page and/or project WhatsApp group.
- Publishing articles in the press on work in progress.
- Monitoring communication outcomes rather than just outputs.

See Creech (2006) for more useful approaches.

## Add-on Communications Module in SocMon Training

In order to reinforce the importance of communication throughout a SocMon assessment or monitoring event, we recommend the addition of a module on communications during the SocMon training. The duration of the module would ultimately be dependent on:

1. The needs to develop communication skills among the participants
2. The length of time participants could commit to an extended training, given that training workshops are typically 5-7 days in duration in most regions implementing SocMon but can be up to two weeks long in the Pacific; and
3. Funding available for the workshop. SocMon funding is usually limited to grants the majority of which is assigned to training, travel costs and assessment or monitoring costs. Assessment or monitoring costs are those particularly associated with data collection, analysis and report production.

We suggest that a minimum of a half-day session on communications be added to face-to-face SocMon trainings. Below is an example of an outline for a communications module that could be adopted and adapted for training purposes. If a face-to-face session is not possible due to participation and funding constraints, alternative means of instruction should be considered. For instance, there are many online resources and communications toolkits that can be used to guide communication of SocMon findings.



## Communicating about SocMon 101

- ***What is communication?***

Use this as an interactive session in which participants note 3-5 words on coloured cards that they associate with communication. The training facilitator will then group similar words and will ask participants to create a definition from the groupings. Participant definitions will be compared to commonly used definitions of communications.

- ***Types of communication***

- One-way vs. two-way
- Science communication vs public communication.
- 

- ***Why communicate SocMon findings?***

- Informing decisions and policy
- Improving and adapting coastal and marine resource management
- Promoting the SocMon brand
- Leveraging funding

- ***Developing communications goals and objectives***

- What is a goal?
- What are SMART objectives?
- Group work: Using goals and objectives of a SocMon study for demonstration. Have participants craft communications goals and objectives for the project. Where possible, use the proposed site-specific assessment or monitoring goals and objectives to develop the communication objectives.

- ***Target audience analysis***

- Identify and prioritize the target audience(s) using a stakeholder analysis to understand interest and power/influence
- Group work: using a SocMon study scenario, have participants map the target audience/stakeholders and categorize them according to the communication approach they would take for each, i.e. keep completely informed, manage most thoroughly, regular minimal contact and anticipate and meet needs.

- ***Creating a “sticky” message***

- 

- Principles of a key communication message
- Deciding on what key messages to communicate
- Group work: Provide examples of communication messages – may be SocMon-specific - and ask training participants to score them for each of the principles of communication messages.

- ***Products and pathways***
  - Determine the most appropriate products and pathways/channels to develop or use?
  - Considering conventional and outside the box tools
- ***Packaging SocMon for uptake***
  - Group work: Using a completed SocMon case, have participants develop outlines for a range of communication products delivered through a variety of pathways.
  - Peer review for critiquing the outlines.

## Conclusion

Globally the uptake of socioeconomic monitoring findings and learning derived from the SocMon methodology has been limited. While from our experience, coastal and marine resource managers and practitioners in SocMon regions understand the importance of human dimensions monitoring and indicate its importance for effective coastal management there is very little evidence of the use and uptake of SocMon data and information in decision-making or for adapting management. Communicating SocMon findings is a crucial but neglected step which we have tried to emphasise in this addendum to the GCRMN SocMon Manual. It is hoped that this addendum will assist SocMon practitioners in better sharing SocMon findings for influencing decisions and policy.

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