

**THE ROLE OF NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS
(NGOs) IN THE PROTECTION OF SEA TURTLES IN EGYPT.
- SAVE THE SEA TURTLE PROJECT IN ALEXANDRIA
(A CASE STUDY)**

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INTRODUCTION

Sea turtles know no boundaries therefore all the scientific institutes, governmental and non-governmental organisations that are involved in sea turtle conservation in the Mediterranean should share the same vision. Namely “saving the sea turtles in the Mediterranean”. However each of them has their own agenda that differs according to the way they tackle the problems that affect the sea turtle population in the region. All over the Mediterranean there are organisations interested in various aspects of nesting site protection, rehabilitation activities, public awareness, clean up the beaches campaigns, lobbying & pressure groups, and scientific research concerned with the species. In Egypt the main problems are lack of scientific research, the illegal trade in their meat, blood and carapace, interaction with fisheries and marine pollution (Nada in press). In the last 10 years accelerated efforts have been made in the field of scientific research, pollution management, public awareness and legislation regulating the sea turtle trade.

In spite of these efforts, what was achieved can only be considered as one step forward for marine turtle conservation in Egypt.

THE PROJECT VISION

Is to protect the sea turtle population in the Mediterranean Sea.

THE PROJECT MISSION

To promote sustainable conservation in Egypt through public awareness, educational activities, advocacy and scientific research.

THE AWARENESS CAMPAIGN. - DATA COLLECTION AND SITUATION ANALYSIS

This is carried out to determine the external and internal factors that may affect the awareness campaign. A pilot study was made to determine, who, how, which, why, and where the stakeholders of the sea turtles in Alexandria are. Methods included Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat analysis of the campaign (SWOT analysis), and Political, Economic, Social and Technical influence control (PEST control) (Torok 1997).

PUBLIC HEARING WITH THE STAKEHOLDER REPRESENTATIVES

This activity aimed to determine the different attitudes and point of views of the various stakeholders and to create a dialogue encompassing these different attitudes and different stakeholders. In the public consultation, representatives from the fishermen, fish sellers, sea turtles' meat and blood consumers, Islamic leaders, Christian leaders, related NGOs, police authority, the National Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries, the media, teachers, the Faculty of Science (Marine Science Department), the Alexandria Governorate, the Fishing Co-operative Societies and the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA) were present. The consultation started with a brief presentation on the problems facing the sea turtles in the Mediterranean and around the world, followed by open discussion chaired by a moderator from the project.

VOLUNTEER AND SUPPORTER RECRUITMENT

This activity aimed to create a group of highly qualified volunteers who care about the turtles. The volunteers were recruited following a number of oral presentations in different locations and with different audiences. At the end of the talk the presenter asked the audience to help in several ways, one of which was to join the Save the Sea Turtles Campaign. Those interested and showing innate or overt abilities were chosen to join the campaign. The volunteers were then trained to make presentations to the different types of stakeholders, to participate in data collection, to join clean up the beach campaigns and to help with the preparation of awareness material.

SEGMENTATION AND TARGETING

This step aimed to identify and target each stakeholder separately since there are major differences in their number, attitudes, educational background, willingness to change and our ability to reach them (Housden 1992, DeAvengo 2000). With each stakeholder several factors were involved in changing their attitude toward the species, these factors included framing of the problem, identifying the situation, developing a target and devising a plan.

DEVELOPING A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Habit development and learning are permanent changes in behaviour that occur as a result of reinforced practices. There are many theories explaining how a habit is developed in humans, the most important one is the stimulus response theory (Berelson and Steiner 1964). This suggests that a stimulus affects a person subconsciously and leads to a sequence of five stages: problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, changing the habit decision and post habit changing behaviour. This step therefore aims to create an appropriate stimulus through an awareness message to motivate, fulfil and satisfy a certain need in each stakeholder, delivered through an appropriate channel after which we test the response of each stakeholder to each message.

The fish restaurant owners: The message was the illegality of the sea turtle trade in their restaurants and the religious aspect of this trade; the channel of communication was through personal negotiation, and the mystery shopper technique was used to evaluate his response. Members of the working team unknown to the restaurant owner visit him in the restaurant a few days later and order a sea turtle meal. If the owner shows a positive attitude refusing to serve the meal, a certificate from the project is sent to him thanking him for his help, if he shows a negative attitude by accepting the order, his name and his restaurant are recorded and sent to the police for the necessary action against him.

The fishermen: The message here was the religious aspect, the legal aspect and focusing on the belief that sea turtles will bring them luck; the channel of communication was through personal negotiation, oral presentations and religious presentation during Friday prayers in the mosque. Evaluation was from records kept of in-depth interviews with a sample of the fishermen.

The consumer of sea turtle meat and blood: The message was the hazards from drinking the blood and the diseases that can be transmitted by it, and the religious point of view; the channel of communication was through oral presentations and the mass media; evaluation of the response of the consumer used questionnaires designed to measure the difference in attitude before and after the presentation.

The school children: The message was that the sea turtle is an important creature, friendly to humans, and which helps in getting rid of the jellyfish (a particular problem on Egyptian beaches); communication was by oral presentations in the schools, poster presentations and colouring competitions amongst the students. The evaluation was done by in-depth interview of a sample of the children after the oral presentation

Mass awareness: The message was the importance of the sea turtle to marine biodiversity, the effect of jellyfish on tourism, and the religious point of view (Islamic teaching holds the drinking of animal blood to be a sin). The message was communicated through T.V.,

press, poster and oral presentations. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the message was made by using questionnaires after the oral presentations and the feedback received through letters, e-mails and telephone calls.

TRAINING OF THE STAKEHOLDERS GROUP OF REFERENCE AND OPINION LEADERS - TRAINING OF TRAINERS (T.O.T)

As raised in the second stage of the Simultaneous Response Theory, people start to search for more information to help them change their habits. In this stage the most effective way of gaining information is consultation with a reference group. These groups can be religious or professional groups and opinion leaders (Moschis 1985). Each segment of stakeholders have their own reference group, therefore this step was implemented to help the reference groups themselves in articulating a vision both about wildlife protection in general and the sea turtle in particular; The channel of communication was through oral presentations, and the evaluation was done through questionnaires given after the end of the presentations. Then Action Plans were developed for each group to communicate their vision about protection and biodiversity.

Islamic and Christian leaders: The vision needed from them was the religious point of view in the face of the destruction of wild life and sea turtles.

Science and biology teachers: The vision needed from them is to show the importance of the turtle in the marine environment, and to focus on the relationship between sea turtles and jellyfish in the food chain.

Local NGOs leaders: The vision needed from them was to spread awareness of the problems that arise from the trade in sea turtles, and the availability of alternatives, such as other sources of protein and proper medical treatment for anaemia and infertility.

Police officers: The vision needed from them is recognition of their responsibility to spread awareness amongst the fishermen as to the illegality of the turtle trade, and the laws that would be used against them if they persist in such practices.

Physicians and pharmacists: The vision needed from them is to communicate their opinion about the hazards of turtle blood consumption and the belief that it's effect in treating weakness, anaemia and infertility is scientifically unfounded.

LOBBYING AND PRESSURE GROUP FORMATION

(not yet implemented)

EVALUATION ANALYSIS, FEEDBACK AND CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

(not yet implemented)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank all the stakeholders that have attended the oral presentations, the interviewees, and those who joined us in the public consultation for their invaluable help and their informative notes, also all the reference groups and the opinion leaders that joined us in the workshops for their participation and their enthusiasm.

My great respect and appreciation to the speakers that helped me in the workshops Mr.Mohamed El Gendy, Dr Adel Abou Zahra, Dr Mohamed Ayad and Dr Samia.

I am sincerely grateful to Mrs. Lily Venizelos, the Trustees and Staff of the Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles, MEDASSET, for their continuous support and advice.

I cannot forget the valuable help and co-operation in conducting this study from Asmaa, Gilan, Milda, Rehab, Mohamed Refaat and Hassan Shater.

Finally, I wish to thank. Dr. Mohamed Abraham and Mr. Wahead Salama from the EEAA for their help and co-operation: The Global Environment Facility (GEF small grants) for sponsoring my project, and RAC/SPA (UNEP/MAP) and CMS for their financial support that allowed me to attend the Conference.

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