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# HCWW **Communications** Strategy

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## HIGHLIGHTS OF COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

### Context:

- HCWW's communications and public outreach efforts are guided by its Communications Strategy, first developed in 2006, and updated semi-annually since then. This document represents an update to this Strategy, and was undertaken by a combined team from HCWW and the USAID-funded WWSS program.
- HCWW's public outreach and education activities are carried out by its Public Awareness Department. Press relations are handled by a Public Relations unit attached to the Chairman's office.
- The objectives of the Strategy are to: boost perception of HCWW and the sector, instill an awareness of conservation issues, increase public's appreciation of costs and process of water treatment, create and promote a participatory approach, and ensure the requisite skills of sector staff.
- This Strategy recommends the establishment of the position of the Spokesperson to coordinate press relations.
- This proposed Strategy includes a Year 1 Action Plan, laying out the tasks, responsibilities, resources and timing for communications activities in the upcoming year.

### Components:

- This Strategy begins with an overview of key factors affecting HCWW's **communications environment**, including the high profile of the water and sanitation sector, the confusing roles and responsibilities concerning sector stakeholders, the importance of public participation and meeting public expectations, the challenge of interacting with the media, HCWW's internal preparedness to address communication challenges, and the ongoing review and refinement of communications activities.
- The Strategy continues with an overview of key **Audiences and Stakeholder groups**, including media, customers, political leaders, subsidiary and HCWW staff, civil society, youth, and donor organizations.
- This is followed by a review of core **Messages** that HCWW will use in its communications activities, including a primer on water related issues, including water's critical role in public health, the importance of conservation, the primacy of the customer in sector operations and the customer's duty to promptly pay water bills, the achievements of HCWW to date and the challenges upcoming, including the costly nature of sector operations, and the importance of sector staff.
- The Strategy is concluded with a summary of key **Channels** to be used by HCWW, including among others various media activities, newsletters, and social media channels, and, in the **Year 1 Action Plan**, the timing, resources required, and responsibilities for each.
- Key Messages and Channels were specified for each Audience/Stakeholder group. A summary of the Strategy, including a mapping of key Messages, Channels and Audiences, is provided on the **Communications Strategy Summary** which follows.

## COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY SUMMARY

Summary of HCWW Communications Strategy		
Context / Communications Environment:	Objectives:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased <b>exposure and importance</b> of water and sanitation</li> <li>Confusing sector <b>roles and responsibilities</b></li> <li>Importance of <b>public participation</b></li> <li>Need to meet <b>public expectations</b></li> <li>Challenging <b>media relationships</b></li> <li><b>Internal organization</b>, including Spokesperson</li> <li>Ongoing <b>review and evaluation</b> of communication activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Boost <b>perception</b> of organization and sector</li> <li>Instill awareness of <b>conservation</b> among water users</li> <li>Increase <b>public's appreciation of costs and process</b> of water treatment</li> <li>Create and promote a <b>participatory approach</b></li> <li>Continue investing in <b>professionalism and awareness</b> of HCWW and subsidiary <b>staff</b></li> </ul>	
Audiences	Messages	Channels
<b>Media</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water sector basics</li> <li>Water and public health</li> <li>Water conservation</li> <li>Customer-service orientation</li> <li>Highlight success and vision for the future</li> <li>Sector constraints and challenges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Press club</li> <li>Press conference</li> <li>Press kit</li> <li>Placed media coverage</li> <li>Press issue rapid response</li> <li>Newsletter</li> <li>Media campaign</li> </ul>
<b>Customers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water sector basics</li> <li>Water and public health</li> <li>Water conservation</li> <li>Customer-service orientation</li> <li>Public duty to pay bills</li> <li>Highlight success and vision for the future</li> <li>Sector constraints and challenges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Placed media coverage</li> <li>Media campaign</li> <li>Sector events</li> <li>Civil committees</li> <li>Internet and social media channels</li> <li>Brochures and publications</li> <li>Customer surveys</li> <li>Youth and schools</li> </ul>
<b>Legislators and decision-makers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water sector basics</li> <li>Highlight success and vision for the future</li> <li>Sector constraints and challenges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Newsletter</li> <li>Civil committees</li> <li>Ministerial coordination and site visits</li> <li>Seasonal outreach</li> </ul>
<b>HCWW and subsidiary staff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water sector basics</li> <li>Customer-service orientation</li> <li>Importance of sector staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Newsletter</li> <li>Civil committees</li> <li>Seasonal outreach</li> <li>Support for local PA units</li> </ul>
<b>Civil Society</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water sector basics</li> <li>Water and public health</li> <li>Water conservation</li> <li>Customer-service orientation</li> <li>Highlight success and vision for the future</li> <li>Sector constraints and challenges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Media campaign</li> <li>Internet and social media channels</li> <li>Seasonal outreach</li> <li>NGO forum</li> </ul>
<b>Youth</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water sector basics</li> <li>Water and public health</li> <li>Water conservation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Media campaign</li> <li>Internet and social media channels</li> <li>Youth and schools</li> <li>Seasonal outreach</li> </ul>
<b>International donors organizations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water sector basics</li> <li>Highlight success and vision for the future</li> <li>Sector constraints and challenges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Newsletter</li> <li>Ministerial coordination and site visits</li> <li>Sector events</li> <li>Internet and social media channels</li> <li>Brochures and publications</li> <li>Seasonal outreach</li> <li>Donor outreach</li> </ul>

## **1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

Since its creation in 2004, the Holding Company for Water and Wastewater (HCWW) has owned and overseen the regional utilities throughout Egypt's governorates responsible for the delivery of water and wastewater services to Egyptian citizens. This role includes a range of communications and public outreach responsibilities aimed at establishing the companies as service providers and building relationships with key stakeholders, including customers. The ability of HCWW and its subsidiaries to communicate the urgency of sector reform, and the improvements and accomplishments achieved to date, has become increasingly important in order to maintain and build on sector progress.

HCWW's communications activities are guided by a Communications Strategy, which was developed in 2006, and was partially updated in 2008. In order to ensure its continued relevance to HCWW's current operational and contextual environment, HCWW, drawing upon the support of the USAID-funded Water and Wastewater Sector Support (WWSS) program, decided to update this Strategy. This update, laid out in the pages that follow, provides direction to HCWW's communications activities in the coming years. This Strategy includes a one-year Action Plan, included as Section 10 in this document, to guide HCWW's immediate communications activities. The Action Plan will be updated annually.

## **2. HCWW COMMUNICATIONS TEAM AND RESOURCES**

HCWW's communications activities are implemented primarily by the General Department for Public Awareness and Customer Service, with support from selected other organizational units, including the General Department for Public Relations. The Public Awareness (PA) Department, located within the Institutional Performance Development sector, and reporting to the Deputy Chairman for Financial and Administrative Affairs, was established in 2006. The organizational preparedness of HCWW to succeed in its communications environment is an ongoing consideration. Following up on the 2006 establishment of the PA Department, it is now recommended that HCWW develop the position of a Spokesperson. This position will be tasked with leading press interaction and other outreach efforts. Many of the activities laid out in this Strategy will eventually be taken on by this position.

As HCWW implements the tasks outlined in the coming pages, it should continue to make use of outsourcing arrangements, where applicable. For example, in the Year 1 Action Plan below in Section 10, HCWW plans to make use of a media company in developing its annual media campaign. In addition, HCWW can draw upon the resources of specialized consultants from the sector for activities such as responding to technical issues in the media, developing and delivering training, and other areas. Similarly, HCWW can continue to make use of the support and resources of donor organizations, such as UNICEF or USAID, in driving forward its communications efforts. The Strategy that follows is ambitious and broad in scope. Many resources critical to its successful implementation may well be found outside of HCWW.

## **3. STRATEGY UPDATE PROCESS**

In order to update HCWW's Communications Strategy, a workshop was held in March 2010, drawing upon the input of the HCWW and WWSS teams, and other sector experts. The workshop involved a series of brainstorming facilitated by WWSS staff. It began with an overview of HCWW's operating context, including a SWOT analysis of what has changed since the initial Strategy was developed.

Sessions followed focusing on key audiences/stakeholders, messages, and channels. In addition, the HCWW/WWSS team coordinated closely with UNICEF and its recently published “Market Research Report on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene” for Egypt, as well as the data resulting from monthly public awareness surveys led by HCWW and select subsidiaries, in producing the Strategy and Action Plan. This Strategy and its related Year 1 Action Plan were subsequently finalized through weekly meetings between HCWW, WWSS, and Cairo Water Company PA staff.

Funded by USAID, the WWSS program provides technical services and related resources to HCWW and selected water and wastewater subsidiaries to: 1) increase their financial and commercial viability; 2) Improve capital investment planning and program/project management; and 3) Build the capacity of staff for increased management and operational efficiency. Following this update to HCWW’s Communications Strategy, the WWSS team will support HCWW in implementing select activities in the Action Plan, including the development of communications guidelines for subsidiaries.

## 4. COMMUNICATIONS ENVIRONMENT

HCWW operates in a rapidly changing operational environment, and its communications activities are continually challenged to keep pace with the change. The section below details key operational factors affecting HCWW’s communications activities in the near term:

### 4.1. Increased exposure and importance of water and sanitation:

Water and wastewater management are important national priorities. The entities working in the sector, including HCWW and its subsidiaries, in addition to other Ministerial and non-ministerial stakeholders, receive significant attention from the general public as well as the highest levels of political leadership. A partial list stakeholders cooperating with HCWW and its subsidiaries in the management of water and wastewater is provided in the Box 1. Water and wastewater sector reform is a priority issue among a large cross-section of the international cooperation sector, and a wide range of donor organizations are currently supporting this sector. Increased political attention and investment to the sector will be beneficial to sector performance, but will also bring along with it increased expectations and demands. The sector, led by HCWW, needs to be prepared for both the opportunities and the obligations of such increased attention.

**Box 1:** Main cooperating stakeholders in water and wastewater management in Egypt:

**Ministries:**

- Housing, Utilities and Urban Development (MHUUD)
- Water Resources and Irrigation (MWRI)
- Agriculture and Land Reclamation (MALR)
- Environment (MOE)
- Health and Population (MOHP)
- Finance (MOF)
- Planning (MOP)

**Other GOE Agencies:**

- Egyptian Water Regulatory Authority (EWRA)
- National Organization for Potable Water and Sanitary Drainage (NOPWASD)
- Cairo and Alexandria Potable Water and Wastewater Organization (CAPWO)

Considerable attention will be focused on the issue of sanitation and the comprehensive delivery of wastewater services in the coming years. The recently developed National Rural Sanitation Strategy attests to the national prominence of this task. There is a sense of urgency related to increasing the percentage of the population with access to wastewater services. HCWW will need to address this issue with sensitivity in the coming years; emphasizing progress being made, while at the same time managing expectations among those demanding immediate results. In particular, its efforts to emphasize sanitation practices among water users should take into account that many citizens continue to lack access to adequate sanitation facilities.

## **4.2. Confusing and overlapping sector roles and responsibilities:**

As in many countries, water management in Egypt is a complex and at times overlapping management challenge. Many entities are either directly or indirectly involved in the management of water resources, its treatment, its delivery to homes and businesses, and the associated regulatory and oversight functions. The process includes HCWW, its regional subsidiaries, the ministerial and non-ministerial organizations listed on Box 1, as well as a range of other governmental and non-governmental organizations including local associations and councils. Often, the roles and responsibilities of each organization within this framework, and the accountability of each for various system components, are poorly understood.

HCWW is in many ways the most visible of all of these entities in supplying water and wastewater services to customers. As a result, there is the risk that HCWW will be held responsible for issues outside of its direct area of oversight. Much of this is facilitated by HCWW's recent improvements in the way that it engages the public in its operations, through customer service centers, the 125 hotline, or regular customer surveys. Criticism may also come from regional government entities, including governors, who until recently, before the establishment of HCWW, were themselves responsible for delivering water and wastewater services to their constituents.

In order to address this confusion, HCWW needs to help clarify sector roles and responsibilities. HCWW should continue to position itself as an "operations and maintenance" company, and to clarify the areas of responsibility that fall inside and outside of this role. At the same time, the unity of the sector as a whole should be emphasized, and HCWW should take a lead in ensuring that sector stakeholders are cooperating and well coordinated. Ultimately, all sector organizations are pulling toward the common goal of affordable and reliable water and wastewater services for all. HCWW's efforts should serve to clarify roles, not evade responsibility. Within this overall framework, HCWW should deal in a clear and transparent way with areas in which progress has been delayed, or difficulties have been faced.

## **4.3. Public participation:**

HCWW has made considerable investments in recent years in increasing its engagement with its customers. Key initiatives include the development of customer service centers in all subsidiaries, the 125 hotline, and regular customer surveys. With greater public engagement, however, comes the opportunity for unrealistic public expectations, and the airing of criticisms and grievances that to date have had no viable outlet. Developing effective procedures and platforms to channel public participation is critical.

A considerable body of global best practice exists in this area, from which HCWW could profitably draw. For example, the example of local municipal boards in the US provides a useful case study. In this example, a local utility creates a public participation board, which meets regularly and provides a platform for citizen engagement. During regularly scheduled hearings, issues are debated, expert witnesses are brought in to testify, and open discussions are supported for a certain consultative period. Minutes of board discussions are maintained and disseminated. This and other similar examples could provide HCWW a roadmap through which public participation can be effectively but efficiently channeled.

New tools for interacting with customers should be capitalized upon. In addition to existing channels, HCWW should continue to find ways to get its messages across, including the quarterly newsletter under development, ongoing publications, and emerging social media channels such as Facebook. In addition,

HCWW needs to redouble its commitment to forging relationships at the local level with influential political groups, including governors and local councils.

Of critical concern to HCWW's public participation efforts is the question of water tariffs. The sensitivity of issues related to water tariffs long predates the foundation of HCWW.

“Historically, water and wastewater sector operations have been heavily subsidized by the government. Since the public has paid very little in tariffs relative to the cost of service, public perception of the value of that service is presumed to be quite low... In addition, there is an expectation that the government will continue to provide basic services for ‘free’ and a belief by some that water is a gift from God and therefore should be ‘free.’ ” (2006 Strategy)

While Egypt's water tariffs remain low in regional and international comparisons, the potential sensitivities of any adjustments to water tariffs could be large. Ongoing emphasis should be made to distinguish costs related to water (the resource) and water services (treatment and delivery costs) in the mind of the public, and to make clear to the public the costs associated with water production, distribution, and treatment.

#### **4.4. Need to meet public expectations:**

Along with HCWW's increased engagement with its customers comes increased public expectations regarding water service and quality improvement, fair and accurate billing, respectful treatment, transparency and candor, and attention to conservation. Major sector reforms, including the creation of HCWW, have increased the public's expectations regarding sector performance. HCWW has made great strides with respect to service delivery. In order to retain the public's trust, however, it must also openly acknowledge the fact that in many areas much remains to be done. HCWW must exert every effort to maintain open communications with its customers, highlighting success, frankly acknowledging failure, and communicating with transparency and candor. For the outreach efforts of HCWW to be taken seriously by the public, they will need to be accompanied by noticeable service improvements.

While frankly acknowledging sector challenges, HCWW should also take a more proactive role in framing the dialogue about sector accomplishments and achievements. Rather than ignoring public criticism, HCWW should work proactively to get its point of view across. In order to do so, HCWW should invest in developing summarized, easy to understand, and compelling case studies of sector success. For every negative story published, HCWW needs to have a coherent response prepared, and a plan for ensuring that its viewpoints receive adequate attention.

In building trust with customers, the issue of billing is critical. Billing is a tremendously sensitive issue; in some cases, rapid increases in household bills led to fierce resistance and attacks in the media. HCWW needs to build and maintain public trust through a fair, reliable, and transparent billing process. As will be continually emphasized throughout this Strategy, the emphasis at this stage must be on improved service delivery as a way to build a relationship of trust with customers. This will set the stage for additional generations of reform in the future. This will also bring about an increased environment of accountability for water utility customers. If HCWW improves service delivery, and ensures open and honest communication, it can also expect the public to have a greater stake in sector performance, including an obligation to pay their bills promptly.

#### **4.5. Challenging media relationships:**

HCWW has made great strides in recent years in improving its relationship with customers. However, much remains to be done with respect to its relationship with the media. Considerable negative media coverage still exists, and many journalists are poorly informed about the water sector. In the absence of other voices, these journalists repeat what they hear reported from other sources, much of which is negative. There is an urgent need to improve sector outreach efforts with the media, including educating journalists with key background information to enable them to report on the water sector with greater accuracy. HCWW needs to ensure that its perspectives, stories, and successes are accessible to media representatives, and promote a more balanced and informed reporting on issues related to water and wastewater in the press.

#### **4.6. Internal organization:**

With the increased exposure of HCWW and its subsidiaries comes the need to reexamine the alignment of the HCWW's internal organization to manage strategic communications. The Public Awareness Department, established in 2006, is capably handling the HCWW's public outreach while also supporting the subsidiaries' communications efforts. As mentioned in Section 2, due to the increased media exposure of HCWW and its subsidiaries, it is now recommended that the position of an HCWW Spokesperson be established. The Spokesperson will lead and coordinate activities targeting the media, and represent the HCWW in public fora.

#### **4.7. Ongoing review and evaluation of communications activities:**

Ongoing efforts to fine-tune and analyze the effectiveness of HCWW messages and activities should be built into its communications efforts. In light of this, Section 9 addresses ongoing steps to be undertaken regarding message evaluation and feedback. The messages and channels selected for HCWW's current and evolving list of priority stakeholder groups should continue to change and adapt reflecting HCWW's emerging communications environment. Given HCWW's customer-oriented focus, feedback on its messages and service are valuable inputs that HCWW can use to refine and improve messages and activities.

## **5. OBJECTIVES**

Taking into account the issues and challenges described above, the objectives of HCWW communications activities include the following:

**Boost perception of organization and sector:** Position the HCWW as an effective organization and service provider in the mind of key stakeholders, including customers and the media. Emphasize the critical role played by HCWW in providing customer service, protecting public health, and protecting the environment. Improve the understanding of key stakeholder groups of the institutional arrangement of the sector, including HCWW's specific roles and responsibilities.

**Instill awareness of conservation and water resources issues among water users:** Promote awareness of water conservation, and change attitudes and behaviors related to water use. Build an appreciation of the importance of wastewater services, and raise awareness of customers about water conservation technologies. Educate consumers on the link between water use, and financial and environmental costs.

**Increase public's appreciation of costs and process of water treatment:** Encourage customers to pay their bills promptly by changing public opinions related to water and wastewater services, improving the

public's understanding of the intricacy of water treatment processes, highlighting the amount of effort and cost being invested in water processing and wastewater treatment, and improving outreach to customers.

**Create and promote a participatory approach:** Build an effective partnership with all stakeholders, including political leaders, media, and customers, in order to provide a unified platform for sector improvement. Acknowledge the important role of each stakeholder group. Emphasize coordination among other governmental stakeholders. Develop a new openness about HCWW activities and operations. Promote substantive two-way engagement with customers, emphasizing transparency and candor. Highlight and promote emerging avenues for customer engagement, including the hotline and customer service centers. Promote engagement and participation in all areas of operations, including building advocacy groups at the local level, and improving communication with local leaders. Continue to develop a customer-oriented approach in all areas of operation.

**Continue investing in professionalism and awareness of HCWW and subsidiary staff:** Invest in sector staff to improve awareness, build capacity, and shift staff culture and attitudes by empowering staff at all levels as “brand ambassadors” for the sector. Improve the consistency of product and service across regional and sectoral units; build capacity of staff to ensure consistent products, messages and services.

## **6. AUDIENCES AND STAKEHOLDER GROUPS**

HCWW and its subsidiaries interact on a daily basis with a wide range of stakeholder groups. To effectively make its case for a commitment to sector reform, and to ensure that its messages are broadly disseminated, HCWW should prioritize the following stakeholder groups in its ongoing communication activities. When reaching out to each of these groups, HCWW needs to understand the segmented communications requirements of each, and tailor its messages accordingly. A summary of key messages, and a “mapping” of which should be prioritized for each stakeholder group, is included in the Communications Strategy Summary earlier in this document.

### **6.1. Media:**

Egyptian media, including radio, print and TV, plays an active role in discussing and framing important national issues, and frequently addresses issues related to water and sanitation. To date, HCWW has been under-effective in guiding the way in which the water and sanitation sector is reported. Many negative, at times outright hostile, stories appear in the national and regional press, and national media figures generally exhibit a poor level of understanding on water and sanitation issues. HCWW needs to build relationships with those writing about water and sanitation issues in Egypt, understand their positioning and vested interests, and make sure its issues and viewpoints are reported. In order to build the effectiveness of its media outreach efforts, HCWW should consider developing the position of Spokesperson, and identifying a roster of key technical issue experts who can serve as the approved HCWW expert to the media when such a topic is addressed. In short, HCWW needs to be PROACTIVE, not REACTIVE with respect to the media.

### **6.2. Customers:**

HCWW and its subsidiaries include residential, commercial, government, and other groups as customers. Serving these groups represents the core purpose of HCWW's operations. Efforts to involve customers further in HCWW operations, including feedback channels such as customer service centers and the 125 hotline, should be highlighted and extended. A spirit of trust, confidence and transparency should be built

between HCWW and its various customer groups. Underperformance to date should be frankly acknowledged, and HCWW's vision to address these areas in the future should be highlighted. Emerging and innovative ways to reach out to various customer groups should be continuously considered.

### **6.3. Legislators and Decision-makers:**

HCWW maintains important relationships with political and other decision-makers on both the local and central levels, including the People's Assembly, governmental and non-governmental agencies, including those referenced earlier in Box 1, political parties and non-sector agencies, as well as local councils and citizen groups. Coordinating between these various groups can be challenging and contentious. HCWW needs to invest in these relationships, and ensure an ongoing emphasis on important areas of shared cooperation. Currently, outreach with political leaders is handled at various levels within the organization. The new Department for Regulatory Relations, reporting to HCWW's Chairman, will facilitate coordination between senior legislators and decision-makers, and will manage and coordinate HCWW outreach to political stakeholders, including the bi-monthly ministerial coordination meetings laid out in the Year 1 Action Plan.

### **6.4. Subsidiary and HCWW staff:**

Sector staff, including HCWW and subsidiary employees, are critical partners in achieving sector goals, and succeeding at sector reform. HCWW invests time and financial resources in ensuring the capabilities and professionalism of its staff. Key investments need to be made in order to ensure that the skills of sector staff are maintained, that HCWW and subsidiary staff remain "brand ambassadors" for the water sector, and that the standardization of service and performance is maintained across units and between subsidiaries. The water sector in Egypt is in the early stages of significant reform. Open channels of communications will be critical in ensuring the success of ongoing reform efforts.

### **6.5. Civil Society:**

The various groups that bring together citizen interests, including NGOs, clergy, business associations, private sector, and political parties and other community groups, can play a significant role in broadcasting HCWW messages and marshalling public support behind the HCWW agenda. Water-related NGO partnerships and representative organizations can play an important role in disseminating and amplifying HCWW messages. Messages need to be tailored for each group in order to ensure its relevance to the particular agenda of each.

### **6.6. Youth:**

A significant engagement with youth benefits HCWW on multiple levels. They are the leaders of tomorrow, as well as future customers of water utilities. Youth voices have demonstrated their effectiveness in taking messages learned from school and disseminating them among parents and other family members at home. HCWW has been active in addressing its messages to youth audiences, particularly via educational channels targeting schools and universities, and partnerships with synergistic organizations and audiences such as UNICEF. It should continue these efforts and continue to identify new channels to engage youth in water management.

## 6.7. International Donor Organizations:

Water management, and the related issues of sanitation, public health, and infrastructure development, are important public priorities, and receive considerable political and donor support. However, investments by donors in water and wastewater projects take place against a backdrop of many competing areas for donor engagement and support. HCWW needs to continue its strong relationships with the donor sector, highlight the success of reform to date, emphasize the strong role played by HCWW in achieving sector goals, and make the case for additional investments. To date, HCWW has built effective working relationships with a variety of donor groups, including USAID, GTZ, the EU, JICA, UNICEF and Dutch and Italian cooperation agencies. Relationships with these organizations should be maintained, and additional partnerships should be considered.

## 7. CORE MESSAGES

To achieve its communications objectives, HCWW should articulate and continually reinforce a limited number of key messages, including the following. A “mapping” of messages to stakeholder groups is provided in the Communications Strategy Summary table earlier.

### 7.1. Water Sector Basics:

#### **“Basic education on water supply and management.”**

This message is intended as a general overview of key elements of water management, the role of HCWW and its subsidiaries in delivering superior water and wastewater services, and the role that water and wastewater services play in a well-functioning society. This message will include several components, including the following:

- **Sector/institutional setting:** Providing an overview of the sector reform process to date, the roles responsibilities of the various governmental and non-governmental agencies involved in the process, and the overall vision and outlook for the sector in the future; Making clear the specific role of HCWW and others in the process; and Emphasizing HCWW’s national corporate role as a holding company, and on the benefits and value-added services of HCWW’s new role.
- **Water treatment process:** Overview of the water cycle, the source of drinking water, the process of production, treatment and conveyance, including the costs of production, and trends in production costs per capita vs. inflation rates. HCWW messages at this stage should continue to emphasize water service and conservation, not tariffs. It should be made clear that HCWW and its subsidiaries are selling water services, not water; while water may or may not be free, water services, including treatment and delivery, are expensive and valuable. HCWW should continue to emphasize customer service with the objective of building public trust and goodwill.

### 7.2. Water and Public Health:

**“Water is key to life and health, and HCWW and its subsidiaries are trusted stewards of this precious resource.”**

This message lays out the importance of water and sanitation systems to environmental health, and the importance of water quality and sanitation to societal health.

“A sound water and sewer system is essential to the protection of public health and the environment and fundamental to Egypt’s social and economic development” (2006 strategy).

It emphasizes that sanitation is important, and that customers should connect to the wastewater system wherever possible. However, HCWW should build a recognition that wastewater services are not available in all areas into its messages, so that areas in which wastewater networks are not currently available do not undermine HCWW’s communications efforts in this area.

### **7.3. Water Conservation:**

**“Water is precious, treatment is costly, and all citizens need to help conserve.”**

This message emphasizes that water is scarce, production is costly, and that water conservation is critical. Water may be free, but treatment and delivery are costly.

“Water is scarce... supply in Egypt is limited, and the country will be challenged to meet the escalating demand for water as the population and economic activity expand” (2006 strategy).

This message not only lays out the importance of the *quantity* of water resources, but also their *quality*. It emphasizes the challenges posed by water pollution, and the linkage between the amount of water used by customers to the amount that in turn needs to be treated by utilities.

### **7.4. Customer-Service Orientation:**

**“We are here to serve you, and we value your input.”**

This message provides an overview of the services HCWW provides, and the avenues through which customers can be in touch with HCWW and its subsidiaries. It emphasizes that HCWW and its subsidiaries are established to serve their customers, and the importance of community engagement in managing the shared resource of water.

“The Holding Company... provides proactive, efficient management (and)... is a dynamic, proactive organization providing improved, quality, reliable service 24×7×365” (2006 strategy).

This message underscores the transparency and accountability of HCWW operations, and educates customers about how to get involved, including channels for participation and communication, complaint processes and procedures, and other appropriate feedback mechanisms.

In particular, HCWW should emphasize that it, the media, and NGOs are partners in delivering services to their common constituencies. HCWW needs to be responsive to partners’ agendas, and determine how HCWW messages can amplify theirs. This message will emphasize that HCWW understands the important role that civil society plays in fostering sound water management, and ensuring the engagement and partnership of the community. “The communities we serve need us; we need you to help deliver our messages.”

### **7.5. Public Duty to Pay Bills:**

**“Promptly paying your bill is a public duty, and helps us do our job.”**

This message emphasizes the importance of the timely payment of water bills in order to sustain and improve the system. It includes an overview of actual costs of water production compared with customer charges through tariffs, and develops an understanding of the extent to which water services are currently subsidized. It summarizes the price paid for water by Egyptian consumers with other comparable markets.

### **7.6. Highlight Success and Vision for the Future:**

**“While much remains to be done, our accomplishments are impressive.”**

This message provides a snapshot of the reform process, and highlights the status of water and wastewater services in Egypt before and after the formation of HCWW. It summarizes successes, and highlights activities and plans for the future, including the continuing need for sector reform and investment. While frankly acknowledging failures and continuing challenges, it highlights the skill of HCWW and its subsidiaries in managing the reform process. It draws upon timely, updated indicators—the statistical foundation of sector success—in order to make the case.

### **7.7. Sector Constraints and Challenges:**

**“Our work is costly, it takes time, and sustained commitment.”**

Progress in the water and wastewater sector is challenging, requires substantial investment, and progress takes time. Infrastructure build-out requires significant investment and sustained commitment. This message provides a summary of the constraints and challenges under which HCWW operates, including that the “provision of water is costly and valuable” (2006 strategy). This message draws attention to sector accomplishments, makes the case for continued and increased resources and investments for the sector, providing clear data about sector budget deficits and future needs. It also advocates for policies and reforms that ensure sector sustainability.

### **7.8. Importance of Sector Staff:<sup>1</sup>**

**“Sector staff are a valuable resource; we depend on you to deliver quality service, and will invest in your skills and knowledge.”**

This message will emphasize the importance of all HCWW and subsidiary staff. It will emphasize the unity of the sector, and the critical role that each staff member plays. It will build loyalty to HCWW and to the sector by building a corporate identity, and emphasizing the importance of customer service. It will make the case that the performance of each utility will be determined by the performance of each individual staff member, and that each staff member serves as a brand ambassador for the utility and the sector. In addition, it will foster a culture of professionalism among sector staff by emphasizing customer service and a customer-oriented focus. It will make the case that the image and branding of the water sector are the responsibility of everyone. It will emphasize that HCWW will reward quality and

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<sup>1</sup> For HCWW and subsidiary staff

performance, and insist upon quality across all operational areas. In this light, a bonus system based on performance should be considered.

## 8. CHANNELS

To address these *Messages* to the *Audiences* described above, HCWW will use a wide range of *Channels*. These channels form the foundation of the Year 1 Action Plan provided below in Section 10, and will be revisited annually as part of the annual update of the HCWW Communications Action Plan. During this coming year, the communications channels employed by HCWW will include the following:

- **Press club:** a quarterly press forum organized by HCWW through which relationships with press figures can be developed and fostered, and in which HCWW and sector messages can be disseminated and emphasized.
- **Press conference:** a forum for engaging with the national or local press, organized by HCWW or subsidiaries, in which an issue or topic of concern will be addressed. Press conferences are distinguished from the above-mentioned quarterly press club as the conferences will take place on an as-needed basis, in response to an issue, such as negative reports in the press, or the launch of an important new initiative or piece of infrastructure.
- **Press kit:** a set of materials to be provided to the media which presents an overview of the sector, the role of HCWW and its subsidiaries, some highlights from the “water sector basics” message outlined above, and channels through which the media can attain additional information.
- **Placed media coverage:** an HCWW-driven media spot, in which a message or messages important to HCWW will be placed in a media outlet, most likely a newspaper. If appropriate, HCWW will pay for this coverage, and will consider timing it around the annual World Water Day which takes place annually in March.
- **Press issue rapid response:** an institutionalized process through which HCWW can respond rapidly and effectively to any water and sanitation related issue that comes to national attention, including a designated Spokesperson at HCWW, who will maintain and draw upon a pre-approved pool of “issue experts” inside and outside the HCWW to respond to particular issues in their areas of expertise.
- **Newsletter:** a quarterly publication distributed to staff from HCWW and subsidiaries, key national and regional stakeholders, and to utility staff via company bulletin boards. It will be available for mail and email distribution.
- **Media campaign:** a comprehensive media campaign will be considered annually through which HCWW disseminates and publicizes messages targeting the general public via a campaign in major media outlets. This activity is not included in the PA Department’s annual budget, and will have to be presented to and approved by the HCWW Board of Directors.
- **Ministerial coordination and site visits:** a bi-monthly high-level forum for coordinating between the various governmental organizations tasked with overseeing water and wastewater management in Egypt, including those agencies mentioned in Box 1 earlier. In addition, this task will include ongoing visits for senior decision-makers to key water and wastewater related sites to raise awareness and highlight issues of concern.
- **Civil committees:** local units organized by subsidiaries that will bring together a selection of key local decision-makers and opinion leaders with subsidiary company representatives. Committees will channel two-way communication: the subsidiaries will educate committee members on water and sanitation issues and the company’s work, and committees will give voice to public concerns to subsidiary leadership. HCWW will assist subsidiaries in establishing such committees.

- **Sector events:** participation of HCWW personnel in key sector events, including conferences, exhibitions and other meetings in order to raise awareness of HCWW and its subsidiaries, and highlight issues of concern to HCWW.
- **Internet and social media channels:** this includes the HCWW website and online social media channels through which HCWW can disseminate its messages to the public and to the youth/student population.
- **Brochures and publications:** key standard HCWW brochures and publications, including fliers, posters and other awareness materials, which will be regularly reviewed and updated.
- **Customer surveys:** ongoing monthly surveys carried out in each subsidiary which can be utilized to evaluate outcomes of communications activities.
- **Youth and schools:** ongoing engagement with youth via schools, including public and private schools, Cairo University, school environmental clubs, and local level youth centers.
- **Seasonal outreach:** annual outreach to key stakeholders via seasonal greeting cards carrying key HCWW messages.
- **Support for local subsidiary PA activities:** ongoing support – including training and guidance - to local PA departments and other subsidiary staff to ensure their willingness and ability to disseminate key sector messages locally. Integrate these messages into existing channels such as staff/new hire orientation programs, Chairmen’s Forum, and others.
- **NGO forum:** ongoing engagement with national NGO groups in order to build awareness and participation with community groups regarding HCWW messages.
- **Donor outreach:** ongoing coordination with current and potential international donors and organizations with an interest in the sector. To ensure donor commitments are targeted, HCWW should continually engage with them in a dialogue on sector priorities, ongoing activities, and successes.

## **9. ONGOING EVALUATION**

The continuous evaluation of communications efforts will be essential to the ongoing effectiveness and relevance of HCWW communications activities. Regular feedback will be solicited from recipients of HCWW and subsidiary communications messages, and these results will be filtered back into the communications process. This feedback can be gathered during regular monthly HCWW and subsidiary survey activities, or through specially developed survey mechanisms. In addition, HCWW will update the Action Plan on an annual basis to be sure that it tracks closely to the company’s and the sector’s current and emerging needs. The Year 1 Action Plan, which follows in Section 10, identifies indicators for measuring the HCWW’s achievement of the objectives outlined in this strategy.

## **10. YEAR 1 ACTION PLAN**

# HOLDING COMPANY for WATER & WASTEWATER

## Communications Strategy

### Year 1 Action Plan



Objectives																		
Boost organizational and sector perception																		
Instill awareness of conservation among water users																		
Increase public's appreciation of costs and process of water treatment																		
Create and promote a participatory approach																		
Continue investing in professionalism and awareness of HCWW and subsidiary staff																		
Tasks and Sub-tasks	Responsibilities	Channel	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Resources	Milestones and Benchmarks		
			Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun				
<b>Task 1: Press club</b>																		
Determine invite list, and define responsibility for invitations	Spokesperson; until this person is in place, Manager of PA dept.	Invitations, personal contacts															Quarterly, final week of each quarter; No site rental required, to be onsite of issue at hand; refreshments and printed materials to be provided.	4 annual events; # press reports; # press reports positive
Schedule time for conference, and coordinate with HCWW Chairman																		
Decide upon topic to be covered with Chairman																		
Determine location and prepare transportation																		
Document what will be inserted, press inserts, and what will be aired on TV/radio; track and analyze resulting coverage.																		
Implement event																		
Conduct survey about impact, using the subsidiary customer surveys																		
Analyze this data to determine needs for the next conference																		
<b>Task 2: Press conference</b>																		
Identify issue to be addressed with Chairman	At HCWW, Spokesperson; Subs' press conferences organized by subs.	Invitations, personal contacts															No site rental required, will be onsite of activity to be publicized, i.e. 125 hotline, customer service center, etc.; room set-up is theatre style, with banner targeting the specific issue.	# events as needed; # press reports; # press reports positive
Determine invite list, and define responsibility for invitations																		
Schedule time for conference, and coordinate with HCWW Chairman																		
Determine location and prepare transportation																		
Document what will be inserted, press inserts, and what will be aired on TV/radio; track and analyze resulting coverage.																		
Customer survey about impact: did the message reach the public?																		
Analyze this data to determine needs for the next conference.																		
<b>Task 3: Press kit</b>																		
Develop/update static material (brochure, fact sheet, flyer, and newsletter)	Spokesperson; until this person is in place, Manager of PA dept.	Personal contacts															Resources include printing budget and technical team input.	# kits requested and distributed; # press reports; # press reports positive
Compile and include press releases			Ongoing															
Distribute to key press contacts			Ongoing															
<b>Task 4: Placed media coverage</b>																		
Identify subject of importance to HCWW, and design article/advertisement	Spokesperson; until this person is in place, Manager of PA dept.	One popular paper, TBD at the time of publication															Resources include technical team input where necessary, and advertising budget; Timing tied to World Water Day each March.	One annual spot; # press reports; # press reports positive
Publish article/advertisement in one popular newspaper																		
<b>Task 5: Press issue rapid response</b>																		
Develop and maintain roster (fixed list) of experts on particular regions and topics	Spokesperson; until this person is in place, Manager of PR dept.	Appropriate media channel, TV, radio, print.															Appropriate expert identified from roster of experts.	# experts identified; # press interactions
When a topic comes up that the HCWW wishes to respond to, prepare the answers, including technical input, figures, and pictures as appropriate																		
Choose right person from this roster of experts to address issue in appropriate forum.																		
<b>Task 6: Newsletter</b>																		
Convene editorial committee to identify issues and articles for the issue.	Manager of PA dept.	Distributed to subsidiary senior staff and key stakeholders including local councilors, senior HCWW staff, key national stakeholders, and donors; displayed on bulletin boards at subsidiaries.															4 pages: P1: headlines, page 2, report or interview with key figure; page 3 news clips; page 4 future events.	4 annual newsletters produced; # distributed
Draft articles and format newsletter draft.																		
Print, distribute, and email distribution																		
<b>Task 7: Media campaign</b>																		
Revisit and amend ongoing customer surveys to include questions related to the UNICEF-sponsored campaign and baseline questions for the new campaign	PA Manager	Various channels determined in coordination between agency and HCWW.															Necessary resources include budget for contract with advertising agency and for buying media time/space. Could also pool funding from subs. <b>Not included in regular PA budget for 2010</b> , so it would need HCWW BoD approval. UNICEF involvement a possibility. First year issue: conservation, costs and investments of water treatment. Note: a foundation of research regarding a proposed mass media campaign exists within UNICEF's 2009 report on "Market Research Report on Water Sanitation and Hygiene."	1 annual campaign; # press reports; # press reports positive; Track qualitative feedback from surveys
Extract results of UNICEF-sponsored campaign to identify lessons learned for replication																		
Evaluate potential for campaign with senior HCWW leadership in light of annual objectives; make go/no-go decision.																		
HCWW prepare RFP and brief for advertising agency																		
Bids received, reviewed, and partner selected.																		
Launch campaign																		
Evaluate campaign, using customer surveys																		
<b>Task 8: Ministerial coordination and site visits</b>																		
Develop Action Plan for inter-ministerial coordination, including list of participants	Department for Regulatory Relations	Sector contacts															Participants to include Ministries of Irrigation, Agriculture, Education, Health, Environment, among others.	6 annual forums held; # ministries participating
Bi-monthly meeting of a committee to coordinate between various agencies overseeing water and wastewater																		
Assemble and maintain a list of key decision makers and influential figures	PA specialist	Regular visits to exemplary facilities to ensure familiarity with key issues, and to build relationships															This will include political leaders (PM, members of parliament). Use initial database developed for UNICEF event, updated regularly	# of visits; # of attendees by agency
Assemble and maintain a running list of facilities/events that would be useful in getting our messages across.																		
<b>Task 9: Civil committees</b>																		
Promote the establishment of local committees, with a gen. sec. for the governorate, including NGOs, media, local political figures. Assist subs by providing documents and ongoing TA.	Subsidiaries, with support from PA dept.	Monthly meetings, occasional															Resources include travel and per diem for participants; Participants include local leaders. Committees' dual purpose is to serve as mouthpiece for disseminating	# civil committees established or

