

Credocast

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About Credo Advisory

Credo Advisory is a strategic communications firm that specializes in designing and implementing strategic, operational and tactical communication initiatives. We provide a full suite of communications support to our clients, which include public communications and advocacy, government relations, community engagement, media relations, crisis communications, digital communications and capacity building.

Our mission is to develop bespoke communications products, activities and campaigns based on knowledge, research and industry insights. With our ability to communicate effectively with diverse audiences and stakeholder groups, Credo's mission is to provide impactful strategic communications advisory from inception to implementation. At Credo, we are committed to improving the way societies communicate.

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“To mitigate climate change, there must be a global crusade and call-to-action that should prompt citizen, organisational, and political action towards alleviating climate change effects.”

Beyond the Clouds



Climate change is an environmental phenomenon with its adverse effects already having global, political, economic and social repercussions. The systematic collapse of the earth’s ecosystem can be seen in the extreme weather conditions, floods and ocean surges, droughts, species endangerment and extinction, rising sea levels, and melting of the ice caps. These are just a few pointers to the fact that climate change must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

To mitigate climate change, there must be a global crusade and call-to-action that should prompt citizen, organisational, and political action towards alleviating climate change effects. To achieve this, climate change advocacy of a global scale should be leveraged to realise the desired change.

This thought piece focuses on the significant role of communications in climate change advocacy.

A Call to Action

There is a global call for world leaders and international governing bodies to become proactive and innovative in addressing climate issues. It is important that citizens, activists, celebrities, influencers, and key individuals around the world lend their voices in calling for climate friendly policies and regulations.

On September 23, 2014, Hollywood actor and environmentalist, Leonardo DiCaprio, addressed government representatives, civil society and business leaders at the United Nations climate summit.¹ DiCaprio warned that global indifference to the imminent environmental dangers was briskly leading to the collapse of the earth’s eco-system. The speech had a record-breaking 3.2 million views on the United Nations YouTube channel, drawing global attention to the severity of climate change.²

¹ Leonardo delivers landmark speech at the United Nations climate summit <https://www.leonardodicaprio.org/leonardo-delivers-landmark-speech-at-the-united-nations-climate-summit/>

² Leonardo DiCaprio (UN Messenger of Peace) at the opening of Climate Summit 2014 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v-TyLSr_VCcg&feature=youtu.be

“ *The public and private sector must integrate pro-climate policies and activities into their principal objectives.* ”

Five years later, teen environmental activist, Greta Thunderberg and founder of the ‘Friday for Future’ movement, has gained world recognition through massive climate protests and social media campaigns. She led millions of mostly young people across 185 countries to participate in the world’s largest climate protest in history, which took place from September 20 – 27, 2019.³ Greta’s success in mobilizing world youths towards climate protest can be credited to strategic communications and engagement through social media platforms including WhatsApp and flyers.⁴

Public & Private Sector Advocacy

The aim of climate change advocacy communication is to tackle anthropogenic activities, foster eco-friendly policies and influence green practises globally. The public and private sector must integrate pro-climate policies and activities into their principal objectives.

At its core, public and private sector integration processes revolve around four steps: planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The success of these steps hinge on the quality of communications, engagements, and media utilized.



Leveraging Climate Agreement Policies

The Paris Agreement on climate change is a United Nations international accord established to help keep earth’s temperature from rising more than 2 degrees Celsius and limit increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius, recognizing that this will substantially decrease the risks and impacts of climate change.⁵ It was signed in 2016 between 195 countries including Nigeria.⁶ It is a testament to the political will and determination of countries to intentionally come together to address climate conditions. Such agreements have facilitated pro-climate government policies and regulations. However, these initiatives must be supported with

³ What You Need to Know About the Global Climate Strike <https://www.elle.com/culture/career-politics/a28985212/global-climate-strike-details-dates/>

⁴ Make the World *Greta* Again <https://www.thenewfederalist.eu/make-the-world-greta-again-11247>

⁵ What is Paris Agreement? <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/what-is-the-paris-agreement>

⁶ Paris Climate Agreement Countries <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/paris-climate-agreement-countries/>

“TV adverts, billboards, radio jingles, eflyers, and online adverts should be employed in advancing the use of renewable energy appliances and systems.”

robust communication and advocacy campaigns and initiatives at national level to promote public awareness and citizen action.

Similarly, other international organisations like the United Nations, Africa Development Bank (AfDB), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Common Markets for Eastern and Southern Africa Secretariat (COMESA), who have also announced their commitment to climate action must communicate the importance of incorporating climate friendly policies into governments core objectives and developmental goals.⁷

Fostering Pro-climate Movements

Promoting Green Energy

In climate change advocacy, efforts must be made to champion green energy and change how electricity is generated and consumed. Fossil fuel-based power plants are the leading cause of air pollution in today's world. Using green energy to generate electricity will minimize carbon pollution and help in tackling the climate crisis. Globally, renewable energy is quickly becoming more prevalent, easier and cheaper to access. However, insufficient advocacy and communications continues to hamper a global movement on green energy, especially in the developing world.

Advocacy and engagement around green energy benefits as well as the promotion of access to green energy solutions will help raise awareness and change behaviours. Specifically, public education around green energy by storytelling with human element and emotive messaging, as well as messaging on the social and economic benefits in traditional and new media, will foster green energy's next big stride. TV adverts, billboards, radio jingles, eflyers, and online adverts should be employed in advancing the use of renewable energy appliances and systems.

Media, Entertainment and Art



Films, documentaries, music, visual and performing arts are powerful mediums to raise climate change awareness and foster action and engagement. For example, films and documentaries are innovative ways to reveal the damaging effects of climate change. Due to their influence on global and popular culture, film

⁷ Leading International Organisations Commit to Climate Action <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/press-release/leading-international-organizations-commit-climate-action>

“ Art and the entertainment industry can give the climate crisis message a narrative frame, a human narrative that will appeal and resonate with the masses.”

industries around the world must integrate climate change messages into their content.

‘An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power’ is a 2017 American documentary film that brought climate change issues to the attention of millions.⁸ The film was centered on capturing the efforts of American politician and environmentalist, Albert Arnold Gore Jr., in addressing climate change issues and convincing government leaders to take advantage of renewable energy. His efforts resulted in the monumental signing of the Paris Agreement in 2016.⁹ The documentary grossed over \$5 million worldwide after its release on July 28, 2017 and was nominated for Best Documentary at the 71st British Academy Film.¹⁰

South African comedian, political commentator and The Daily Show anchor, Trevor Noah, released a YouTube video on October 23, 2019, where he humorously addressed climate change issues and called for more political action. The clip continues to trend on social media and sparks public awareness.¹¹

Factsheets and technical reports may serve for data communications, however, they fail in garnering public interest or support. Art and the entertainment industry can give the climate crisis message a narrative frame, a human narrative that will appeal and resonate with the masses.



Championing Climate with Social Media

The 2019 Global Week for Future was a series of school strikes and protests regarded as the world’s largest protest on climate change which took place in over 4,500 locations across 150 countries with an estimate of six million participants.¹² Environmentalist and founder of the movement, sixteen-year-old, Greta Thunderberg has had huge success in inspiring millions of people, especially young people, to demand for drastic climate actions through social media. With 8.2 million followers on Instagram, 3 million followers on Twitter, and 2.7 million followers on Facebook, Thunderberg has leveraged on the massive audience to spread her climate change message. Hashtags like #climatestrike #fridaysforfuture and #schoolstrike4climate are drawing international attention and spurring global conversation and action on climate matters.

⁸ An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power’ <https://www.climaterealityproject.org/initiative/inconvenient-sequel-truth-power-speech-at-the-united-nations-climate-summit/>

⁹ Commentary: Sundance: ‘An Inconvenient Sequel’ marks a welcome return to the spotlight for Al Gore <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/movies/la-et-mn-sundance-inconvenient-sequel-opening-night-20170120-story.html>

¹⁰ Al Gore’s ‘An Inconvenient Truth’ Sequel Gets Summer Release Date <https://variety.com/2017/film/news/inconvenient-truth-sequel-release-date-1201963887/>

¹¹ Trevor Noah Tackles Climate Change | The Daily Show with Trevor Noah https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-PSR_Outulu

¹² Climate crisis: Six million people join latest wave of global protest <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/sep/27/climate-crisis-6-million-people-join-latest-wave-of-worldwide-protests>

“Traditional mediums of communication cannot be overlooked in integrating strategic communications to influence environmental behaviours.”

A group of young students and graduates, known as the Sunrise Movement, gained political and global prominence by positively repositioning the Green New Deal. Green New Deal is a legislation proposed by American politician Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez that aims to tackle climate change issues.¹³ The Sunrise Movement is an American youth-led political movement that advocates for political action towards climate change. In collaboration with Ocasio-Cortez, the group staged a successful sit-in to protest the neglect of environmental policies.¹⁴

In Nigeria, social media campaigns like #YouthClimateActionNG are increasingly raising national awareness on climate change matters among the 113.3 million Nigerians on social media.¹⁵ Environmentalists and climate champions are progressively using hashtags and social media to send their message and applying pressure on governments by calling for tougher climate laws and regulations.

Climate Change Through Mass Media

Traditional mediums of communication cannot be overlooked in integrating strategic communications to influence environmental behaviours. Radio, television and print media are fundamental tools that can be used in sensitizing the masses. TV and radio programming with climate issues will increase participation on climate issues as well as foster environmental consciousness.

For example, with support from the CGIAR (Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research) Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security in Southeast Asia (CCAFS SEA), the Philippine Federation of Rural Broadcasters (PFRB), launched a radio campaign titled 'Mobilizing the Rural Sector for Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation: A Pilot Radio Campaign in the Philippines.'¹⁶ The campaign was focused on raising climate change awareness and mobilizing steps towards climate mitigation among communities, 85% of whom still depend on radio for information.



¹³ Green New Deal proposal includes free higher education and fair pay <https://www.newscientist.com/article/2193592-green-new-deal-proposal-includes-free-higher-education-and-fair-pay/>

¹⁴ How the Sunrise Movement built a viral climate campaign without twitter ads <https://www.theverge.com/2019/11/11/20955880/sunrise-movement-twitter-ads-ban-climate-change-green-new-deal>

¹⁵ Number of internet users in Nigeria from 2017 to 2023 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/183849/internet-users-nigeria/>

¹⁶ Tune in: Philippine rural broadcaster to promote climate-smart agriculture https://ccafs.cgiar.org/blog/tune-philippine-rural-broadcasters-promote-climate-smart-agriculture#.Xd_N3uhKhPY

“For grassroots engagement, townhalls, community workshops, and face-to-face interactions are great avenues to counter climate change scepticism and promote eco-friendly initiatives.”

Tackling Skeptics & Misinformation

Many people are skeptical about climate change despite all the data and information proving it. US President Donald Trump is one of the most powerful climate change skeptics. Like him, millions continue to reject climate advocacy and refer to them as ‘messages of doom.’ Continuous grassroots engagement and sensitization is required to counter this perception. Engagement must be consultative and participatory and not antagonistic.

For grassroots engagement, townhalls, community workshops, and face-to-face interactions are great avenues to counter climate change skepticism and promote eco-friendly initiatives. Activities like planting trees, community clean ups, proper waste disposal, water conservation and using of less fossil-fuel products among others can become community-based driven initiatives. Particularly, youth engagements are critical. Climate change education must be incorporated in school curricula while public communication should also be tailored to a young demographic. This generation of youth can become climate champions in their communities and will be helpful in countering skepticism, as well as can help drive future campaigns and pro-climate behaviour.

Private sector firms like Nigeria’s Wecyclers are re-directing and promoting behavioural change through grassroot education, public campaigns and community engagements. Educating rural women and children on environmentally friendly habits can be impactful.¹⁷ Burning of firewood and trash (common practices in rural communities) releases carbon emission to the atmosphere which destroys the eco-system and adds to air pollution.

Credo Experience

Credo Advisory has lent its expertise in canvassing for better climate conditions in Africa and specifically, Nigeria. In line with the United Nation’s sustainable development goals of providing affordable and clean energy, Credo Advisory’s communications initiatives have been influential in the implementation of renewable energy projects in Nigeria. Specifically, Credo’s client support to the Rural Electrification Agency of Nigeria (REA) is centred on providing communications strategies for community engagement and public advocacy on renewable energy.

Conclusion

As global warming continues to deteriorate the environment, strategic communications must be used to help create global awareness and motivate more than just behavioural change but a universal political will to address arising climate issues. Private and public sector must become deliberate in tailoring specific messages to specific audiences. However, the supporting climate policies and regulation is key for impact. The fight against climate change can only be won with comprehensive collaboration across governments and citizens, with communications driving the message and desired pro-climate behaviours home. With advocacy and communications, climate change can transition from being a buzz word to becoming a global effort and grassroots movement.

¹⁷ War on waste makes sustainable business more profitable <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-27413189>