

CONSUMER EDUCATION CAN LEAD TO BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

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Environmental activist since 2009, Younès Drici Tani was one of the first to devote himself entirely to the environmental cause in Algeria. After a master's degree in corporate law, he decided to multiply clean-up operations, first in his home province and then throughout the whole country.

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Changes not only at macro level but also at micro level are required to create more sustainable and efficient essential services in Africa. From this perspective, how can we promote change in consumer behaviour when we know that it is difficult to transform habits and beliefs that are rooted in everyday life? A set of four articles has been chosen to describe in detail consumer education strategies put in place to create awareness and changes in consumer and citizen behavior. A comparative and analytical approach helps understand how: i) the diffusion of off-grid solar energy in rural areas is facilitated by a few key principles of consumer education strategy; ii) social network have become a civic mobilization channel for cleaning up garbage in public spaces; iii) the future of drinking water is transformed by journeys of citizen mobilization.

Consumer awareness as a central feature

Gordon Achola, Country Manager, Exp Agency

There is general consensus that social behavior change is a complex phenomenon and process that is influenced by many factors, personal and environmental. Any effective strategy employed to influence behavioral modification or change in the essential service access sector (energy, water and sanitation) must have awareness creation as a central feature. Studies have demonstrated significant relationship between awareness and consumer behavior. One such study by Ishak & Zabil (2012), notes that awareness is prior to and leads to effective consumer behavior.

Though commonly referred to as consumer awareness, this component should target different segments of the audience including current consumers, potential consumers, policy makers, gatekeepers, community level influencers and all other persons or groups that shape opinion in a specific area. Social behavior change interventions are normally faced with three consumer awareness intervention need scenarios: one where there is a complete lack of awareness about a behavior service or product, another where the awareness level is inadequate and lastly, where the target audience has the wrong information. All the three scenarios need to be anticipated and addressed in the design of a consumer education strategy. To achieve this, a reliable formative research should be conducted in a creative way to unearth deep seated target audience realities.

Consumer awareness hardly ever starts from scratch, in many cases, the target audience already has some level of knowledge about the focus product or behavior and in a few cases they have all the required knowledge but still do not practice the behavior. I classify consumer awareness as either passive or active, the former being the most common. It is the objective of behavior change interventions to activate existing knowledge and move the bearer from passive awareness to action, while disseminating new knowledge to those that do not have adequate awareness about a service, behavior or product.

Some maxims imperative in the design and implementation of effective consumer education strategies for essential services can be identified. These include:

- i.) **Relevance:** This is perhaps the most important consideration to make when designing a consumer education strategy. The message needs to be relevant to the target audience and their immediate environment, including peers and gatekeepers. So should be the choice of communication channels, materials, connection points and even time of engagement.
- ii.) **Evidence:** Adopting an evidence-based approach is hugely beneficial to consumer education interventions. Reliable data facilitates decision making, especially around target setting, path definition, learning

and assessment. Evidence-based approach calls for permanent insight gathering and interpretation, but should not be complex and costly. Simple dipsticks and documentation of learnings from daily experiences come in handy, if properly planned and executed.

- iii.) **Stakeholder involvement:** Consumer behavior is not entirely intrinsic. Hence, it is influenced to a large extent by the environment and even more so by national, community and household level influencers, opinion shapers or stakeholders. Great attention should be dedicated to the identification of relevant, stakeholders, influencers/opinion shapers, in order to engage them at the most appropriate stage, level and manner. Reading about the World Wildlife Fund for South Africa's Journey of Water campaign in this publication, the role of influencers in consumer education and behavior change communication comes to the fore.

- iv.) **Channel integration:** Channel integration increases reach potential, message intensity and believability. Carefully design messages and activities such that they can be amplified via different channels. Go with a multi-channel approach and have a clear amplification plan. For example, always design on-ground activities in a way that they can be the content for above the line media. The Lighting Africa programme's huge success, as explained in this publication, is partly attributable to the inclusion of consumer education in the program and particularly channel and message integration.

Consumer education has continued to evolve, more so in response to technologically driven trends. The next decade will see an increased shift towards remote word of mouth, especially in the developing world where smart phone penetration is incipient. Aware of this possibility, many organizations and programs have created digital transformation plans and are well on their way towards achievement of the same. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced such organizations several steps ahead in their digital transformation plans.

Social media undoubtedly forms a major part of previous, current and future consumer education strategies, with benefits that range from general awareness to behavior adoption. A perfect example of the place of social media in consumer education, covered in this issue, is the #TrashtagChallenge by environmental activist Younès Drici Tani, which went viral and catalysed worldwide behaviour change that encouraged thousands of young people to start clean up and waste collection operations in their neighbourhoods. To spur social media as a consumer education channel, influencers are oftentimes handed the intermediary role between campaigns and consumers. Popular as it has proved to be, questions abound in the

social influencer questions regarding the social influencer's approach arise, among which: Who is the best social influencer and, how relevant and committed will the selected social influencer be to a campaign?

Sufficient literature exists on how to best choose a social influencer but not so much is documented on how to make the influencer an extension of the campaign in question. In an attempt to answer the two questions, I observe that they are intertwined in the sense that a non-fitting influencer may not make an extension of the campaign, no matter how much they are trained. This is due to the fact that a social influencer is made up of many moving parts including the individual, its followers in terms of numbers and demographics, interests, core content, activity types and levels and their perceptions, among other attributes. It is therefore imperative for campaigns to check the first box by making the best selection of an influencer given their prevailing circumstances. Yet, many times, this process is hardly given the attention it deserves. Instead, influencer decisions are based merely on the number of followers, selector's preference, cost and most importantly the influencer's involvement (or lack of it) with other campaigns or brands in the market.

Deliberate matching of influencers to the behavior being promoted is often missing in many influencer decision processes. Doing so helps campaigns select the most relevant influencer; one that looks, acts and speaks the message being passed. This calls for a structured study of available influencers to identify areas of confluence between their attributes and those of the behavior/brand in question. Granted, the higher the number of followers, the higher the reach but this does not necessarily mean that there will be a

It's not enough selecting the best behavior change influencer, endeavor to influence the influencer to make them an extension of your campaign

connection between the audience reached and the message or behavior being promoted.

The reason campaigns hire influencers is mainly because influencers are better placed to be trusted and to amplify campaign messages, given their large number of aspirational followers. However, beyond selection of a relevant influencer, campaigns need to do more than an hour's briefing on the messaging or campaign attributes. They should take the influencers through a process that can be called 'influencing the influencer'. This process is quintessential in the sense that behavior change promoters should be an extension of the campaign, they should 'feel' the behavior and develop an emotional connection with the campaign before going out to speak for it.

Influencing the influencer involves a rapid, highly structured experiential engagement with a potential influencer, aimed at sharing the truth about the behavior and evoking informed belief in the content to be promoted. This way, programs are assured that the most relevant influencer is amplifying the correct campaign message in a natural and passionate manner that leads to a deeper connection between the influencer, their followers and the behavior in question. This works magic as it filters the hidden 'sponsored' perception that followers get whenever influencers mention campaign names or messages in their engagements. Something very important to note is that influencers too, have a significant role to play in this process. One of the key roles is for influencers to take time and study campaigns/brands in their markets so as to understand and be ready for those that resonate with their persona, and they should be able to say no to campaigns that do not run along the same gain.

Lessons from Lighting Africa experience

Nana Nuamoah Asamoah-Manu, Operations Officer, Lighting Africa, IFC

Over 250 million people in sub-Saharan Africa lack access to grid electricity. Millions across the continent therefore rely on lighting sources like candles and kerosene lamps in spite of the resultant hazardous effects on their health, wellbeing, and environment. Off-grid solar technology can provide the lighting and much of the communication and entertainment requirements for these consumers. However, in order to change their lives, people need to know about these better alternatives.

Consumer education creates awareness of these solutions and leads to the needed behavior change (Singh, 2011).

Irrespective of the positive behavior we seek, consumer education enables people to do at least one of the following things; i) make informed choices, ii) protect themselves from exploitation, and/or iii) seek a better way of doing things (Flowers, Chodkiewicz, Yasukawa, McEwen, Ng, Stanton, and Johnston, 2001). Having used fuel or biomass-based solutions for many years, the introduction of renewable energy-based solutions is not an automatic choice unless consumers are educated about off-grid electricity solutions. This is why consumer education and behavior change are critical for off-grid electricity.

LIGHTING AFRICA'S APPROACH

The World Bank Group's Lighting Africa and Lighting Global programs seek to develop markets for quality off-grid solar products in rural and off-grid areas (Lighting Africa, 2020). To achieve this, it is essential that potential consumers be adequately educated to be able to make informed decisions, leading to behavior change. Hence, we incorporated extensive consumer education into our activities.

Our approach to consumer education is not "one-size fits all" and is always tailored to the particular market or environment we are targeting. However, we are guided by these steps:

1. Market Intelligence/ Situational Analysis + Objective Setting;
2. Strategic/ Tactical planning (main approach, targeting, selection of tools, including messaging and channels);
3. Allocation of resources (Purse, People, and Period);
4. Evaluation and Adaptation.

These are applied as follows:

First, we conduct scoping activities to understand the consumer and the market. Right from the beginning, we seek to understand what is being used for energy locally, the resultant challenges, and lifestyle decisions in relation to this. Through this process, we also develop clear objectives in terms of potential reach and impact. Models used for this information gathering phase include on-the-ground focus group interviews, engagement of opinion leaders, and good background studies.

Second, based on the findings from the situational analysis, we develop the most suitable consumer education strategy for the setting. This includes creating messaging that will be useful and resonate locally, as well as choosing the channels with the most impactful reach. Over the years, the program has used both mass media and face to face activities like vernacular (local dialect) radio, group forums, and roadshows. More recently, we have also begun using social media (mobile phone accessible) to reach target audiences.

The importance of the enabling environment for effective behavior change must also be noted. This means the campaign must, right from the beginning, identify and engage the stakeholders who will facilitate this change. For example, it is critical to engage the potential retail market that will stock the products, or potential financial institutions like MFIs¹ that will provide funding enabling purchase. In many Lighting Africa programs, local electrical shops and supermarkets were found to be relevant solar sales outlets, and organizations that accessed the target

groups like factories, commercial farms, and NGOs², were non-traditional yet effective sales channels. In Kenya, we found that educating relatives based in urban areas during festive periods like Christmas was an effective strategy to promote uptake amongst those traveling to "Shags" (their rural homes) with gifts. They became excellent facilitators of behavior change in the target group once adequately informed.

With the messaging, language, and channels determined, a clear action plan is then developed.

The next step is to allocate adequate resources to the different elements of the plan. Consumer education is not cheap and its effects are only seen in the longer term, hence it requires know-how and resilience. In our experience it was crucial to make adequate financial resources available for the entire campaign. Identifying the right delivery agency is also key. We engaged agencies that had a strong understanding of local rural behavior change using experiential processes. We recruit these agencies at the beginning of the process so they are involved in the situational analysis, tool development, and planning.

For sales partners, Lighting Africa exclusively engaged suppliers of products meeting Lighting Global Quality Standards (some known as "associates") to ensure that consumers were receiving products they could rely on. These partners needed to be adequately resourced to take part in and benefit from consumer education campaigns. These and other partnerships and collaborations were found to be invaluable. We worked closely with the industry associations to get their support. It is also very important to have government – particularly local government – buy-in, to reach consumers. In some countries, as it was the case in Ethiopia, the government's Energy Bureaus played an instrumental role in the Lighting Africa consumer education campaigns.

This entire process is cyclical in nature, with regular reviews conducted both internally, and with key stakeholders. In such reviews, the program evaluated the number of consumers reached, their feedback on their experiences with solar, their level of awareness, the number of retailers on board, changing demand, and critical obstacles to the uptake of solar products. Where a weak spot is found, these are quickly addressed and the strategy updated, making sure to adapt resource allocation as well. For example, the earlier Lighting Africa campaigns did not include messaging on how consumers could access financing. However, during the review process, it came to light that although the core messaging was well received, people could not afford the upfront product costs. Bringing on MFIs and SACCOs³ to

Three takeaways: (1) each market is different, (2) addressing the entire eco-system will support effective change and (3) be sensitive to the environment and deal with distracting "noise"

1 MFI – Microfinance Institution

2 NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

3 SACCO - Savings and Credit Cooperative Organisation

support the financing, greatly improved solar adoption. This uptake was further improved when PAYGO⁴ was introduced and the consumer education campaigns began containing consistent information about how consumers could get financing through MFIs, SACCOs, or PAYGO suppliers.

LESSONS LEARNT

During the course of carrying out consumer education campaigns in over 10 countries and 3 continents by Lighting Africa and Lighting Global, many lessons were learned. Those that could define success or failure are already highlighted above. Three key take-aways are:

a) **Each market is different.** A consumer education campaign must be aligned to the market and the target consumer to be successful. Specific messaging around solar that is successful in market A, may not be useful in market B. Therefore, ensure you listen to the consumer to determine the best approach to trigger their behavior change.

b) **Addressing the entire eco-system will support effective behavior change.** For example; ensure necessary buy-in from opinion leaders, authorities and relevant partners/gatekeepers. Ensure there is adequate supply of products and that suppliers are plugged into campaigns with their stocks. Engage authorities on issues of counterfeiting and

bad quality products, as if not addressed, they will cause loss of confidence in off-grid solar as a whole.

c) **Be sensitive to the environment and deal with distracting “noise”.** Where there is mixed messaging due to external circumstances, learn to modify or pause campaigns. For example, where there was political tension, we adjusted or waited for a more appropriate time.

Ultimately, successful consumer education requires flexibility and relevance to the target consumer and market. It is also essential to note that behavior change is not instantaneous; it requires patience and continuous effort to be impactful.

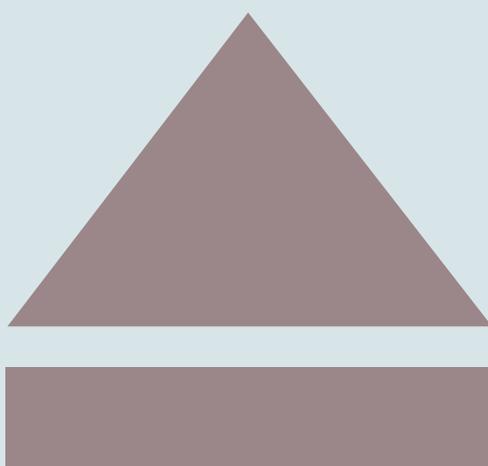
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⁴ PAYGO – also known as “Pay-as-you-go” is technology that allows end-users to pay for solar energy in periodic instalments whilst they use the products.

A model of Consumer Education refinement (CE +) from Lighting Africa

What does C.E. entail?



Each CE day

- 6 forums 20+ people, 1 hr session Target; CBOs, Churches, Women’s groups Youth groups etc.
- 1 Roadshow 1,000 people, market day, centre (3 - 4 hrs)
- Local vernacular radio

PLUS

- SMS (1,600 Nov–Dec. 5,800 MAY – JUNE)
- MFIs
- Radio interviews – Brand specific
- Outlet introductions + posters
- Plantations/ Organizations
- Retail workshops
- Newspaper supplement

OPTION – sponsored CE. Distributors, NGOs, YIKE

Strengthening civic action through social networks

Younès Drici Tani, non-affiliated environmental activist

A LOOK BACK AT THE #TRASHTAGCHALLENGE

In 2018, environmental activist Younès Drici Tani published on social media an astonishing picture of a clean-up operation in an Algerian countryside. He followed the #TrashTagChallenge, a hashtag and challenge launched a few years earlier without much echo. The challenge is simple: find a polluted or waste-covered place, clean it up, and post on social networks a picture of the place before and after the operation. Younès Drici Tani's picture quickly travelled around the world, demonstrating that a simple action can have an almost immediate impact on its direct environment. The #TrashTagChallenge went viral and for several months, thousands of photos of rivers, beaches, fields and forests cleaned all over the world bloomed on social networks. The phenomenon is still going on today and continues to change behaviors in favour of waste collection and the preservation of nature.

Your picture and the #TrashTagChallenge has been a worldwide success and has encouraged thousands of young people to start clean-up and waste collection operations in their neighborhoods. How can social networks be an accelerator of environmental behavior change?

Younès Drici Tani: Social networks have an essential role to play in mobilizing citizens. As they are easily accessible, they allow everyone to share content, opinions and ideas and, above all, to encourage others to take action. In the case of #TrashTagChallenge, a real community was created online. Citizens participated from all over the world demonstrating the ability of people to unite to face a global environmental problem that affects all of us. And all of this was done without raising any money.

What is interesting is not the tool itself but the use that is made of it. Thousands of totally useless challenges, with no social impact, exist on these same social networks. I exploited the fun and viral side of these challenges with the #TrashTagChallenge to have a positive environmental impact. In this case, social networks serve citizen engagement and behavior change.

Do you find that awareness of waste collection and recycling has accelerated in recent years, particularly in Algeria?

Y.D.T.: I have been an environmental activist for more than 10 years. This struggle requires great perseverance. But the signals are rather positive, and awareness of this issue is growing fast. The success of the #TrashTagChallenge is a good example. I observe changes in habits, especially among younger people who are much more conscious than previous generations. In my neighbourhood, children are launching their own initiatives to clean up the streets.

There are several key elements to accelerate awareness and action:

First, people need to take action at their own level, and that's why I'm already encouraging them to take action individually. I am acting as an individual and not as part of an association. I think that ecology must exist without any structure because it is in the hands of each one of us. Then, we must bring the subjects back to the individuals as closely as possible. The issue of waste management is also linked to issues of well-being and community living. My awareness raising work brings to mind the human, collective and societal aspects of the issue. Finally, access to information, especially for children, is a key factor. Ecology is not sufficiently taught in schools. Understanding the natural limits of the planet and the main principles of ecology are yet essential elements to ensure that new behaviors are adopted in a sustainable manner.

Many analysts, particularly those who are sensitive to ecology, consider that the global health crisis we are experiencing could act as an electroshock and accelerate progress in the ecological transition. Do you share this vision?

Y.D.T.: I do think that the Covid-19 crisis will lead to a faster and more widespread collective awareness. The lock-down offers a time for reflection and allows us to take a new look at our surrounding environment. We can see cleaner air, more vegetation and animals, a renewed calm... Many of us are sensitive to this and will adapt our lives and habits at the end of this crisis.

SHOW – DON'T TELL: Journey of Water connects urban dwellers with where their water comes from

Andrea Weiss, Media Manager, WWF South Africa

When it comes to water security, South Africa is a country that is particularly vulnerable to climate change, relying primarily on surface water dams for its water supply. At 490mm a year, its rainfall is around half the world's average and, to complicate matters further, this rainfall is highly seasonal and increasingly erratic as the planet warms up. In relative terms, because of its larger population and variable rainfall, South Africa is in fact more water scarce than neighboring Namibia, despite the fact that Namibia is a desert with only half of South Africa's average annual rainfall.

Research done by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)⁵ shows that only 10% of the surface area of South Africa supplies some 50% of surface water runoff. This study identified 22 parts of the country as Strategic Water Source Areas. These are the most important sources of freshwater from a national perspective because they supply a disproportionately high amount of the country's water in relation to their size. The CSIR work shows that water from these areas supports half of South Africa's population, 64% of the economy and about 70% of irrigated agriculture – yet only 18% of this land area enjoys any kind of environmental protection.

The objective of the Journey of Water is to immerse city dwellers in an outdoor experience that follows water from its natural, mountain source to the city – tracing its path from a pristine environment down river courses into dense urban areas. On route, participants see, experience,

and learn what happens to water as it makes a long and arduous journey to the city. This story is about how water is used, moved, and distributed. It is about water quality and quantity and also often showcases positive examples of stewardship and what people – from rural villagers to commercial farmers – are doing to look after water and the land it journeys through. Launched in 2013 by WWF South Africa, this flagship campaign brings home the message to urban people that “water doesn't come from a tap”.

WWF South Africa had the right technical network of excellent expertise and reach to tell people about water conservation. But we also know that changing behaviour is hard and good communication is critical. The Journey of Water was created by WWF South Africa with the support of Ogilvey, an advertising agency, to focus on these Strategic Water Source Areas identified by the CSIR study which have been the location of each of WWF South Africa four “journeys” to date.

The campaign is based on the following pillars.

A UNIQUE COMBINATION OF PHYSICAL CHALLENGE AND REAL-LIFE EXPERIENCE TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT WATER

Many journeys involve physical activities such as hiking, paddling and, most recently in South Africa, zip-lining through high mountain gorges. Underpinning this physical journey is the message that the best way to ensure there is water for human needs is by looking after the natural environment or “ecological infrastructure”, keeping catchments healthy and clear of invasive vegetation and reducing pollution into rivers and streams. For the first Journey of Water, the Berg River Dam (funded by the World Bank) was an aptly chosen starting point – being the first dam in South Africa to incorporate environmental principles into its design to allow the release of water for ecological needs in the river. Alongside this, the catchment that feeds the dam was cleared of invasive vegetation to ensure increased water flow into the dam and to help protect the highly biodiverse indigenous vegetation (fynbos) in the surrounding mountains. The first journey was the longest, starting with a 26km hike over the top of the mountains, through the Winelands and across the Cape Flats, eventually into the historic underground water tunnels in Cape Town. That's how participants came to understand why Cape Town was first named “Camissa” or “sweet waters” – this water runs out of sight and mind in these tunnels beneath the city and into the sea.

⁵ CSIR, Protecting South Africa's strategic water source areas, May 2017



Walkers at Berg River Dam - ©Trevor Ball

A SPECIFIC TARGET AUDIENCE TO MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE

Water users from urban areas were the target audience in South Africa and a group who were well placed to make a real difference in terms of power of voice and sustainable consumption. To be even more specific, WWF South Africa's communication strategy targeted the "New Million", a term coined to describe urban South African millennials. A secondary audience for the campaign was partners and key stakeholders in the water sector and media (both digital and traditional) to gain the necessary exposure that is needed to deliver both impact and understanding of the campaign.

CALLING ON WATER EXPERTS AND AMPLIFYING MESSAGES THANKS TO KEY INFLUENCERS

Aquatic ecologist Dr Jackie King was invited to be the opening speaker of the first Journey of Water. Dr King is a WWF-SA board member who went on to become the 2019 Stockholm Water Prize Laureate for her global contribution to river management by advancing the science into environmental water flows. Her internationally lauded work focuses on how much water is required in a river to keep it alive and ecologically healthy.

For each "journey", a handful of key influencers, such as actress Carishma Basday or extreme swimmer Ryan Stramrood, are invited to participate on a pro bono basis and to amplify the messages through their channels. In the process they are exposed to typical challenges in catchment areas and are able to use their own voices to tell the story.

While the original aim was to create awareness rather than any specific call to action, the campaign had another real benefit. This was that it picked up very concretely on the policy and environment/public discourse around water – leading to a much sharper focus on ecological infrastructure at a national scale. It is worth noting that the first sentence used at the launch of a National Water Master Plan for South Africa by the Infrastructure Minister was the line "water doesn't come from a tap".

A TRUSTED VOICE

The Journey of Water also played a role in establishing WWF South Africa as a key voice during the 2017/2018 'Day Zero' drought which saw the City of Cape Town come perilously close to being the first major city in the world to run out of water. As a trusted voice and a first responder in this crisis, WWF published and disseminated a series of 10

"water files" addressing many of the most pressing issues that citizens were facing – using a network of technical expertise and translating this information into non-technical language. These files were eventually collated into a single publication⁶ for use during the inevitable future and current droughts.

During this water crisis, Cape Town reduced its water consumption by half, largely through behaviour change on the part of citizens. As water awareness was raised, many residents of the city began to measure and reduce their water consumption, implementing measures such as the reuse of greywater for domestic use (for the flushing of toilets), cutting their shower times and capturing rainwater in rain tanks on their properties for garden use.

JOURNEY OF WATER GOES GLOBAL

In the intervening eight years since the first Journey of Water first kicked off in South Africa, the campaign has captured imaginations and gathered momentum around the world. The first country to follow South Africa's lead was Zambia, which focussed its journey on the Kafue Flats – an increasingly water stressed stretch of the Kafue River, which provides most of the capital's water and much of the country's electricity as well as sustaining the sugar cane industry and unique biodiversity. Malaysia has now run three "journeys", rapidly capturing media and social media attention. In Brazil, participants journeyed by foot, horse, bike and boat along the Paraguay River to highlight threats to the Pantanal, the world's largest tropical wetland which is home to over 4000 species and a vital source of water for rural communities and distant cities. In China, the journey directly reached thousands of people, but this paled in comparison to its huge impact on social media.

Before the Covid-19 pandemic gripped the world, 2020 was shaping up to be another leap forward with journeys planned on the Mara River in Kenya and the textile-dominated and biodiversity rich Buyuk Menderes River in Turkey as well as a potential multi-country journey through the Amazon of Europe taking in Austria, Hungary, Slovenia and Serbia. Running journeys of water in a record number of countries in 2021 will be essential to remind people that this water does not come from a tap but from nature – from healthy rivers and wetlands.

WWF South Africa had the right technical network of excellent expertise. But we also know that changing behaviour is hard and good communication is critical

⁶ WWF, The Water Files communicating in a time of water crisis, 2018