



We grow vegetables, we eat vegetables!

Communication strategies
for school vegetable gardens



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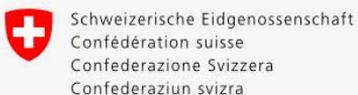
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“Vegetables Go to School” Project Partners



Project Donor



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Students feel a sense of accomplishment when they can grow their own vegetables. Share their enthusiasm with your school and community!

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Picture boards are among the many tools available to demonstrate the progress of your school garden to the entire school community. This board at SD Kemiri #3 in East Java, Indonesia shows who's involved and what's going on in the garden at a glance.

How is your school garden growing?

A school vegetable garden offers many learning possibilities for students and members of the community. Besides being a source of nutritious vegetables to improve the diets and health of students, school gardens add interest and depth to lessons, provide green space on school grounds, and engage the broader community in school activities.

To ensure your school garden program continues to grow and thrive, you need to keep students interested and let the community know about your achievements. So take a few moments to plan a communication strategy for sharing your progress with others.

A good communication strategy is built around three simple concepts:

- **GOAL:** What you want to achieve
- **GROUP:** The people you need to reach
- **GAIN:** The information that will benefit/meet the needs of those people

Numerous tools and techniques can be used to stimulate people's awareness, participation and capabilities, but there is no one combination of messages and methods that can guarantee success. Just keep these concepts in mind as you develop strategies to promote your school garden, and you'll be well on the way to engaging the interest of your audience.

To set a goal, begin at the end

Picture your ideal school garden at the peak of vegetable production: It is a beautiful and attractive green addition to your school grounds, where students actively enjoy learning about growing plants, producing food, and improving health. They are eating more vegetables! Focus on that picture and develop a brief goal statement: "Our students will grow and thrive in the District #3 Primary School Vegetable Garden," for instance, or "The school garden will enhance our students' health and knowledge." Let the goal direct all your communication actions related to the garden effort. You can then develop specific approaches for different audiences.

A-U-D-I-E-N-C-E

In your school garden project, you will likely want to share information with several different groups of stakeholders, or target audiences.

Your messages about gardening and nutrition will differ, depending on your audience. Consider their perspective. What might some of their perceptions or concerns be about a school garden? What kind of information will they need to create, maintain and promote a garden—and eat more vegetables? How do they prefer to receive information? Follow your A-U-D-I-E-N-C-E:



Tailor your information to your audience. Stakeholders' need for knowledge will differ, depending on their interest, education, expectations, and more.

A **Analysis:** Who do you want your message to reach?

U **Understanding:** What is the audience's knowledge of the subject?

D **Demographics:** What is their age, gender, education background, etc.?

I **Interest:** Why would they want to listen to, watch or read your message?

E **Environment:** Where will this message be shared or seen?

N **Needs:** What are the audience's needs associated with the subject?

C **Customization:** What needs/interests to address for a specific group?

E **Expectations:** What does the audience expect to learn?

A school garden project would typically have five main audiences:

Students: Expect plenty of questions! Students will want to know why the school is creating a garden, why they are being asked to participate, how much effort and time will be required from them, and what they will get out of gardening (A grade? Fresh vegetables? Lunch? A chance to have fun with their friends outdoors?). Create a sense of camaraderie and ownership around the garden, and students will begin to identify it as an inclusive but special activity—one they will want to join.

Parents: They need assurance that the garden activity will benefit their child and will not detract from other “more important” subjects. They may want to know how the harvest will be used: consumed in the school canteen, or perhaps sold for extra school income. Explain why their children’s body measurements are being taken. Parents can learn from their children; consider how you can help your young school gardeners “bring lessons home” to engage their parents.

Colleagues: Your fellow teachers, school administrators, and ministry officials are key audiences for support and advice. Keep them informed about the progress of your school garden. Seek their input and look for ways to use the garden to connect colleagues across disciplines.

Community: People living in the village or neighborhood around the school may be curious about this new school activity. Build on that interest or spark it by inviting the public to join your school’s effort to improve nutrition and health. Consult local farmers and representatives from local government, health clinics, food markets, nongovernmental and other community organizations; they may be willing to provide expertise to extend the garden as a community learning tool.

Media: Local newspapers, radio and TV stations can help spread your message if you provide them with fresh, interesting and timely information; global media (web/social media) can extend your garden activities to the world. Include the media in your communication strategies—but be aware that focusing a lot of effort on obtaining media coverage may not always help you achieve your goal, and may absorb resources that could have been put toward communicating with other key audiences.



Develop your message

Good messages capture the hearts -- not just the minds -- of the stakeholders you need to reach.

To develop a strong, compelling message, think about the **benefits** a school garden provides for each of your audiences. Focus on what a school garden **does**.





Give your school garden an identity by creating a mascot. The mascot image can be used on posters and signs, clothing, and other items.

Why not make a garden mascot costume for special school events?!



Awareness

There are many methods and tools you can use to answer questions, create awareness, and generate interest about your school garden. Here are a few:

- **School Garden Day:** Hold a special event to launch the garden. Invite local dignitaries, parents and farmers to join the students in a ribbon-cutting ceremony. Let them plant some seeds or seedlings with the students. Take photos and post them around the school. Contact the local newspaper or radio station. Remember the global community, too: Be sure to share your pictures with the Vegetables Go to School Web/GIS Platform.
- **Who's who:** Let the whole school know who's involved! Provide your garden team with special hats, ribbons, pins, T-shirts, vests, scarves or some other item to create an identity.
- **Garden mascot:** Engage students in creating a colorful and fun character as a symbol for the garden. Use the mascot on signs. Make a mascot costume and ask a student to wear it at school events.
- **Signs:** Create a welcome sign for the garden. Have the students research and prepare signs to identify different vegetable crops in the garden. Ask them to note why particular vegetables are good for health—for instance, vitamin A benefits eyesight.
- **Announce it!** Offer garden updates during regular school announcements. Mention the vegetables that are in season. Be sure to say why vegetables are good and important to eat -- use the opportunity to talk about nutrition.
- **What am I eating?** If school garden vegetables are served in the school canteen, put signs next to the food so students know where their food is coming from, and who was responsible for growing it.
- **Garden tours:** Encourage participating students to guide their peers around the garden, explain what is growing, and talk about how vegetables are good for health and a garden can be good for the environment. Offer special student-guided tours for parents and other community members.

- **Farmer friends:** Invite local farmers to inspect the garden or teach a specific gardening method to students.
- **Get cooking!** Invite a well-known local food stall owner, cook or chef to come to your school and demonstrate how to prepare healthy vegetable dishes using vegetables from the school garden. Ask them to prepare a traditional dish—*momo* in Nepal, for instance—by using different vegetables, or substituting vegetables for meat.
- **Famous gardeners:** Find out if there are famous people in your country, such as singers, TV stars or sports figures, who enjoy gardening or who promote healthy lifestyles. Invite them to your garden (you never know, they might come!) or ask for a signed photo with a message promoting gardening and health that you can post in the school.
- **Gado Gado Garden:** Select a favorite national recipe—*gado gado* in Indonesia, for instance —and grow the vegetables needed for the dish together the same section of the garden.
- **Organoleptic testing:** Invite parents and community representatives to join students in evaluating their vegetable crops for taste and appearance. Pass out ranking sheets and let students compile the data to share with participants.



Incentives

Healthy competition lends excitement and fun to everyday activities. Set some challenges based on garden activities and watch students rise to the occasion:

- **Cooking competition:** Let different groups of students prepare simple vegetable dishes for a classroom snack. Everyone samples the food and votes for their favorite vegetable dish. The winners get their recipes published in a pamphlet.
- **Grow big:** Give student gardeners a chance to nurture some big crops. Measure the fruit by size or weight. Put the biggest vegetables on display for all to see, and award the growers with certificates or other acknowledgement.
- **Art show:** Involve students in sketching the garden and some of the individual plants. Post their drawings around the school in a special display.
- **Music:** Encourage musically inclined students to write and sing a song inspired by the school vegetable garden. Let them perform the song during a school assembly. Record it on video, if possible, and post it on YouTube.

Share your experience!

- Put photos, stories, videos and other materials on the Vegetables Go to School **web**: <http://vgts.avrdc.org>
- Does your school have a **website** or **blog**? Share some photos of the school garden! Ask your students to write short entries about their experiences in the garden.
- Link up with other school gardeners in your country or around the world on **Facebook** and other social media platforms. Do a search on "school gardens" and see what comes up!



Plan a strategy

Map out your communication activities after you have given some thought about the audiences you would like to reach and how you are going to reach them.

The strategy chart on page 10 provides a sample strategy for communicating school garden activities. Here are the things to consider as you plan a communications strategy:

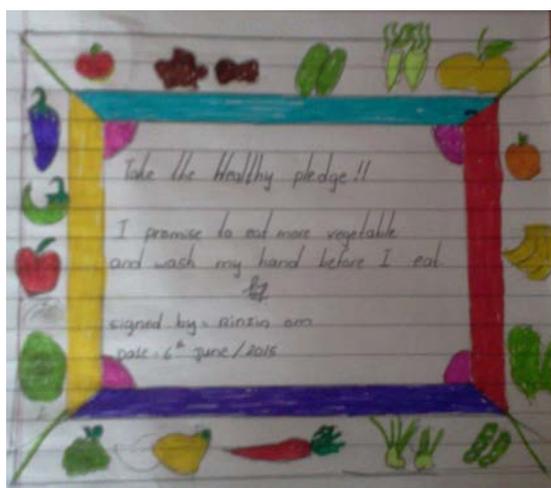
Audience: Which individual or group?

Goal/Needs: What should the message achieve?

Message: What is the message?

Method: How will you convey the message?

Timing: When will the message start and end?



Who's Responsible: Who will carry out the communication effort?

Cost: How much will it cost?

Use the blank strategy chart on page 16 to begin planning communication activities to promote your school vegetable garden.

SAMPLE: Communication & Promotion Strategy for School Gardens

Audience [Name]	Goal/Needs [What should the message achieve?]	Message [What is the message?]	Method [How will the message be conveyed?]	Timing [When will the message start and end?]	Who's responsible? [Who will carry out the communication effort?]	Cost
Individual students	Remind children on a daily basis to eat more vegetables	"Eat more vegetables"	<p>PERSONAL REMINDERS</p> <p>Pencil case with the message "Eat more vegetables in local language</p> <p>Pencil with the message "Eat more vegetables" in English</p>	Give to all participating students (beginning of school year/ semester)	AVRDC prepares the pencils and cases Country partners distribute the items	
Individual students	Reinforce importance of eating vegetables and practicing WASH (water-sanitation-hygiene) by having students reflect on their daily habits		<p>ESSAY COMPETITION</p> <p>Students write an essay about eating vegetables for health, or why they should practice WASH</p> <p>Students present their essays once a week in class, during health/nutrition lessons</p> <p>Best essays receive awards at School Garden Day, and are posted on VGtS website</p>	Once a year	Teachers at participating schools	

<p>Individual students</p>	<p>Encourage a personal commitment to better health</p>	<p>"I promise to eat more vegetables and wash my hands before I eat."</p>	<p>TAKE THE HEALTHY PLEDGE TEAMS</p> <p>At the beginning of the school year or semester, teachers distribute index-sized pledge cards to students: "I promise to eat more vegetables and wash my hands before I eat."</p> <p>Students sign and date their cards, and post them on a board or wall in the classroom. The pledge board is a reminder of the commitment each student has made. The teacher can refer to the pledge board during lessons on nutrition and health.</p> <p>Each student takes five (or more) pledge cards to distribute to their family members and neighbors, asking them to also sign the pledge.</p> <p>At the end of the year, each student interviews one of the people they gave a pledge card to, and asks them if they were able to follow the pledge and what changes they made to their daily routine as a result of taking the pledge. In the classroom, students discuss the responses they have collected.</p>		<p>AVRDC prepares card template for translation, or schools prepare their own</p> <p>Country coordinator: translation, card printing, distribution to teachers</p> <p>Teachers at participating schools: distribute cards to students</p>
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Audience [Name and needs]	Goal [What should the message achieve?]	Message [What is the message?]	Method [How will the message be conveyed?]	Timing [When will the message start and end?]	Who's responsible? [Who will carry out the communication effort?]	Cost
Students as a class	Remind children on a daily basis to eat more vegetables Spark classroom discussion about the need to eat more vegetables and wash hands	"Vegetables: We grow 'em, We eat 'em!" "Wash up before eating"	CLASSROOM POSTERS	During school year	AVRDC prepares a template for translation to local languages Country partners distribute template to schools Schoolteachers print and put up posters in their classrooms	
Students, families, community	Engage and educate the community about the benefits of school gardens Give students a sense of pride in their accomplishments	"School gardens benefit the community as well as the school"	SCHOOL GARDEN DAY Students give tours of the garden to parents, other students, teachers, people from local community, local farmers Prepare samples of vegetables for tasting. Students put on skits or sing songs about the health benefits of consuming more vegetables, and demonstrate good WASH practices Best essays and drawings prepared earlier in the year receive awards. Invite local dignitaries and media.	Once a year	Teachers, students and parents at participating schools	

Other schools participating in VGtS; interested public; students	Share what has been learned with a broad group of people Promote school garden programs	VGtS WEBSITE Share photos, videos, short articles about VGtS activities in participating schools	Post throughout the year as events occur	Country coordinators post on their own or send to Project Manager for posting	
Local media	Share what has been learned with a wider group of people in the community	BROADER PROMOTION VGtS activities highlighted in local radio, TV, newspapers, websites, blogs, social media, etc. Contact reporters with story ideas, send short articles, alert them to school garden activities	Disseminate throughout the year as events occur	VGtS country coordinators Teachers	
Other project countries	Share what has been learned with a broad group of people worldwide	BROADER PROMOTION VGtS activities highlighted in partner newsletters, websites, social media	Disseminate throughout the year as events occur	AVRDC; University of Freiburg; VGtS Project Manager; Swiss TPH; VGtS country coordinators; Teachers	

Communication & Promotion Strategy for School Gardens

Audience [Name]	Goal/Needs [What should the message achieve?]	Message [What is the message?]	Method [How will the message be conveyed?]	Timing [When will the message start and end?]	Who's responsible? [Who will carry out the communication effort?]	Cost

“Take the healthy pledge”

Making a commitment to change is the first step in changing a behavior.

The following sample “pledge cards” can be reproduced as part of your school garden communications outreach to students.

Distribute the cards, ask the students to sign, and post the cards in a prominent place in the classroom.

By signing the pledge, the students will have made a promise to themselves that they may be more likely to keep.

Posting the pledges for all to see encourages the signers to keep their promises!

Consider distributing pledge cards to interested family members as well, to post in the home.

Students in Bhutan take the Healthy Pledge!





Take the HEALTHY PLEDGE!

**I promise to eat more vegetables
and wash my hands before I eat!**

date

my name



Take the HEALTHY PLEDGE!

**I promise to eat more vegetables
and wash my hands before I eat!**

date

my name



**Je prends
l'engagement
de rester en
bonne santé !**

**Je promets de manger plus de
légumes et de me laver les mains
avant les repas !**

date

mon nom



**Je prends
l'engagement
de rester en
bonne santé !**

**Je promets de manger plus de
légumes et de me laver les mains
avant les repas !**

date

mon nom



Ikrar Hidup Sehat!

Saya berjanji untuk makan lebih banyak sayuran dan mencuci tangan saya sebelum saya makan!

tanggal

namaku



Ikrar Hidup Sehat!

Saya berjanji untuk makan lebih banyak sayuran dan mencuci tangan saya sebelum saya makan!

tanggal

namaku



स्वस्थ बन्ने प्रतिज्ञा
गर्नहोस !

मैले धेरै तरकारीहरु खानको साथै
खाना खान भन्दा अगाडी सावन
पानीले हात धने वाचा गर्दछ !

मिति

मेरो हस्ताक्षर



स्वस्थ बन्ने प्रतिज्ञा
गर्नहोस !

मैले धेरै तरकारीहरु खानको साथै
खाना खान भन्दा अगाडी सावन
पानीले हात धने वाचा गर्दछ !

मिति

मेरो हस्ताक्षर

Classroom Posters

The following samples of simple classroom posters can be adapted for use in the classroom.

Keep the message simple and direct.

For greater impact, use photos of your own students eating vegetables and washing their hands.

Even better: Have students design their own posters or drawings to hang in the classroom to reinforce important messages about vegetable consumption, gardening, and WASH.

Encourage students to draw or paint their own posters about school gardens and WASH activities.





VEGETABLES

We GROW 'em!

We EAT 'em!



**Who are you
bringing to lunch?**

**Wash up
before eating!**



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