

# Guide to developing a Red Alert Strategy

## MEDITERRANEAN ALLIANCE FOR WETLANDS

Based on the Civil Society Guide: Cheat Sheet – Advocacy by Hanan Abdulhadi, 2020

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The Red Alert System is a mechanism to identify and try to stop or reduce emerging threats towards wetlands of importance within the Mediterranean Basin [see the document The Red Alert System: A mechanism to identify and mitigate threats towards wetlands of Mediterranean importance/MAW].

To launch a Red Alert, it is imperative to develop a strategy in order to improve the Red Alert's chances of success, help maximize the use of limited resources, anticipate obstacles and respond timely to unexpected events.

The following document aims to guide the Red Alert applicant and its task force to identify essential aspects that will form the backbone of the strategy. It is highly recommended to consult the annex at the end of the document, which further clarifies the questions and provides guidance on how to design a successful strategy.

## **1. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

- **What are your specific objectives for this Red Alert? Remember that your objectives should be: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound**

## **2. TACTICS**

You should define the tactics that you are carrying out with your institutions. The Mediterranean Alliance for wetlands will discuss with you the possibility to support some of the proposed activities, if needed.

- **What needs to be done? Does it have to be done in a particular order?**
  
- **What do you want to say and who do you need to reach?**
  
- **How will you communicate the message?**
  
- **How will you build community and/or political support? What strategies will you employ?**

- **Have you already used some of the following advocacy tools before asking for this Red Alert? (Please tick your answer):**
  - Lobbying:** Seeking to directly influence policymakers into supporting a cause
  - Mobilization:** phone call/email campaigns, sign-on letters, rallies, marches
  - Meetings and events:** private advocacy meetings, roundtable discussions, public panel discussions, lectures
  - Traditional media:** strategic placement of opinion articles, TV and/or radio interviews, press conferences
- **Please describe how you have used these tools**

### **3. RESOURCES**

#### **Human Resources:**

- **Do you have staff members and/or volunteers to help you achieve the tactic you have planned?**
- **Does the organization possess communication skills to help raise awareness? Please develop**

#### **Financial Resources:**

- **Does the organization have funds to execute the proposed activities?**

#### **Network Resources:**

- **Are there other organizations that you can collaborate with to help you reach the goals?**
- **Are there specific organizations within your network that you can rely on to compensate for any skills or resources you lack or that can reach different audiences?**

## 4. AUDIENCES

- **Who are your allies?** (those who share in your cause and who might be willing to take action to help you further your goal)
  
- **Who are the agents of change that can help you?** (people in power who can take actions to help you realize your campaign goal. This group includes policymakers, legislators and government officials, as well as business, religious, and civic leaders)
  
- **What specific elements of the issue are relevant to your target audience and why?**
  
- **What is the best way to approach them and how can your position be framed so as to appeal to their sensibilities?**
  
- **Which aspects of your message will be most persuasive to them?**
  
- **Have you identified influencers that can help you?** (people or organizations who have broad reach and can sway the public. They can be active at local, national or international level)

## ANNEX

### A.1. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

A goal represents a broad, primary outcome or a general guideline that explains what you want to achieve. Objectives, meanwhile, define the strategies and implementation steps you will need to take in order to achieve the larger goal. ***Setting a clear goal and developing SMART objectives is perhaps the most important step in developing your strategy.***

- Be **Specific**: What do you want to do? Be clear about what you want to achieve and narrow down the scope so that it is manageable. There are several ways to manage the scope of your objectives, including: limiting geographic parameters, focusing on one portion of the problem, prioritizing those most in need, etc.
- Make your objective **Measurable**: How will you evaluate your progress and how will you know when you have achieved your goal?
- Ensure that it is **Achievable**: Is the objective realistic and attainable? Do you see a path towards achieving it? Do you have the tools and resources to achieve it?
- Make sure the objective is **Relevant**: Is this a current priority issue for your organization and the constituency it represents?
- Be sure that your objective is **Time-bound**: How much time is required to achieve the objective? How quickly does change need to happen? Set a reasonable timeframe and milestones to help you evaluate progress.

### A.2. TACTICS

How you achieve your advocacy objectives will depend on the context in which you are working and ***tactics are what you must do to accomplish those objectives in that context.*** You can seek to directly influence policymakers or indirectly appeal to them through media outreach or by mobilizing constituencies. In some cases, you will deem it necessary to take both routes.

### A.3. RESOURCES

In order to develop feasible and effective tactics, you must carefully assess your resources. Most advocacy activities are drawn out, medium- to long-term projects, ***so it is important that you ensure from the outset that your organization has the resources necessary to implement the chosen strategy.*** You should consider your resources strategically, remembering to anticipate surprises that will demand new, or additional, resources and to consider opportunity costs.

#### A.4. AUDIENCES

Before you get to work, *it is important that you get to know your audience and identify key stakeholders who might have an impact on your activities.* Many different types of constituents can influence advocacy actions including allies and opponents as well as influencers and agents of change.

To determine how to approach various audiences, assess the level of interest and influence that each has. A particular policymaker may have a high degree of influence over the policy you wish to enact, but if they are not interested in the matter, you will have to persuade them of its urgency. Alternatively, if you are working with an official who may have a deep interest in your issue but little influence over the policymaking process, you may benefit more from their know-how and network of more influential contacts. It's also important to spend some time getting to know your audience.

- **Allies** are those who share in your cause and who might be willing to take action to help you further your goal. Allies can be individuals, other like-minded organizations, grassroots groups, academics, journalists and professional unions, or even businesses and corporations. You should reach out and seek the support of your allies and encourage them to participate in your activities.
- **Agents of change** are people in power who can take actions to help you realize your goal. This group includes policymakers, legislators, and government officials, as well as business, religious, and civic leaders. This group represents the main target in any advocacy activity because this will be the group that can help you enact the change you are rallying for. Consider any high-level staff of national or international treaties, conventions, agreements to which your country has adhered (ex. local and national environmental authorities, RAMSAR, AEWA, Bonn Convention, Bern Convention, European Commission and regional initiatives like MedWet or MedPAN).
- **Influencers** are people who have broad reach and can sway the public. Besides those on social media, influencers include well-known media personalities, celebrities, and other public figures who have recognition and a platform. Influencers are not critical to an advocacy approach, but can help raise public awareness and mobilize support.

## A.5. MESSAGING

Generally, it's best to have one primary message supported by two or three secondary ones. The primary message is your main message and is broad, simple, and direct. It is a consistent theme that holds the entire advocacy activity together. Secondary messages support the main message and explain how it is to be achieved. Secondary messages should be tailored to the principles, perceptions, and preferences of the target audience. Above all, your messaging should be:

- ***Clear, credible, compelling, concise, and consistent.*** This may seem like a lot of requirements for a short message, but crafting a message that checks all the boxes won't be a problem once you have clearly defined the problem and developed actionable policy recommendations.
- ***Simple enough to understand and remember, but persuasive and incorporating a direct call to action.*** Promoting clear, actionable, and evidence-based recommendations is critical to advocating for policy change.
- ***Moral and rational, thereby appealing to both hearts and minds.*** Your target audience should be persuaded by the principles espoused by your message and convinced by the reasoning behind it.
- ***Consistent in visual style, repeated, and reinforced.*** Your audience should be able to recognize your visual materials and easily remember your message because it is consistent and frequently repeated so as to be both familiar and persuasive. Repetition is a simple and effective persuasion technique. Used strategically, keywords, catchy phrases, and memorable refrains help to reinforce messages.

To reinforce a well-crafted message:

- Choose effective spokespeople who are credible, eloquent, and convincing communicators.
- Articulate problems and desired actions clearly.
- Emphasize the urgency and importance of recommendations.
- Incorporate human interest and evidence to appeal to hearts and minds.