Expert Roundtable Briefing Paper (1):
What Makes an Influential Messenger?

This Briefing Paper is one of two relating to an Expert Roundtable to be held in Bangkok, Thailand, on 15th and 16th August 2018.

The Roundtable will bring together a range of interdisciplinary experts including conservation practitioners, representatives from academia and experienced marketers and advertisers, to share evidence, insight, expertise and lessons learned, around the most effective 'messengers' and 'messaging' to employ, in 'demand reduction' communications.

The outputs arising from Roundtable discussion will inform 'Good Practice Guidelines' on both aspects. These will be posted as reference material for the Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) Community of Practice, on www.changewildlifeconsumers.org.

A list of associated reading material is provided in Annex 1.

The Roundtable is convened primarily through the USAID Wildlife TRAPS (Wildlife Trafficking Response, Assessment & Priority Setting) project, in coordination with the USAID Wildlife Asia Activity. Elements have also been supported by the German Polifund project, implemented by GIZ on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the German Federal Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU).

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1. Background

The role of 'messengers' is recognised by practitioners in sectors such as health, development, environment, and now conservation, as one of the most influential factors in influencing enduring behavior change.

Celebrity endorsement is frequently used as a key tactic in attracting attention to emotive issues of social concern, including those associated with animal welfare and threats to endangered species. Some papers have suggested that alternative methods might be employed as best practice however (e.g. Burgess, 2016; Duthie, Veríssimo, Keane, & Knight, 2017). Overall, there remains little consensus amongst those delivering demand reduction communications around the effectiveness of one approach over another and the factors that are influential in that, and therefore in reducing demand for illegally sourced and traded wildlife products.

Evidence and experience in other fields have shed light on the personal characteristics and personality attributes that can influence the 'success' of messengers. Success has previously been defined both in terms of raising awareness and mobilising society around an issue of social concern, as well as in promoting changes in lifestyle choices and habits, purchasing preferences and buyer behavior.

This raises the important issue for program planners as to how the use of a messenger of any kind, celebrity or otherwise, will increase the opportunities for reaching the objectives of the effort and stimulating behavior change. Messengers might be used for various purposes, depending on what element of the change process that any project is interested in influencing. The Table below illustrates some examples.

Table 1: Program Objectives and the Role of Messengers

Program Objective	How Might a Messenger Help
Raise awareness	Attract attention and increase exposure
Educate or inform	Direct people to resources, provide direct education and/or model behaviors
Enhance brand personality	Their personal attributes may be used to make positive or desired associations with the campaign or program
Increase conversations about the issue	Provide questions and 'probes' for others to pass on and discuss ('set a public agenda')
Influence decision-making about whether to engage in a behavior	Provide credible and/or powerful reasons for or against an issue
Engage in a specific behavior	Model and reinforce the behavior
Support legal/political reforms	Provide a framework for solving the problem
Engage in community action	Be a convener, leader and participant

Nine types of messengers are often used in mass media public campaigns:

- Celebrities
- Public officials
- Expert specialists
- Organisational leaders
- Professional models or performers
- 'Average people'
- 'People like me' (also known as peer influencers)
- Experienced people (victims, survivors, perpetrators)
- Unique characters (such as animated characters or mascots)

Friends, colleagues, community and religious leaders and family members can play a more active role in behavioral change initiatives.

A strategic question for program planners is when and how to use a messenger to help achieve a program objective given the characteristics of the audience being targeted for behavior change. Many approaches to raise awareness tend to use celebrities, unique characters and public officials; education or informational objectives tend to rely on experts while decision-making and behavior change objectives will more often employ 'average people', 'people like me', experienced people and organisational leaders. Each type of messenger has its advantages and disadvantages, especially in the context of what specific objective the program has, what the specific message components are, and how are they going to be perceived and received by the priority population (e.g. Silk, Atkin & Salmon, 2011).

In addition to inherent features of the individual, the tone, manner and personal style adopted by the messenger is also reinforced as important—for example, adopting a credible and authoritative tone, rather than one didactic and moralising.

Broader considerations such as messenger 'popularity' or appeal are something critical to consider when seeking 'reach' (in particular through social media mechanisms e.g. re-postings), while similarities of the messenger with the priority group will impact their persuasiveness and ability to influence behavioral changes. This similarity (whether it be age, gender, religion or ethnicity among other possible 'matches') or 'resonance' with the audience to lead to behavior change, is also influenced by the social environmental opportunities and constraints people face in trying to regularly practice the behavior. (e.g. Cialdini, 1985; Fell, Austin, Kivinen, & Wilkins, 2009; Silk *et al*., 2011).

Reflection and discussion is thus welcomed at this Expert Roundtable, to determine the most appropriate elements to consider when designing SBCC to reduce demand for illegally traded wildlife products.

Key Points

Messengers might be used for various purposes, depending on what element of the change process one is interested in influencing.

There are many different 'types' of messengers used in campaigns, before the various characteristics and personality attributes within each 'type' are considered.

When and how to use a messenger to help achieve a program objective is an initial key strategic question to consider.

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2. Expert Roundtable Objectives

1. To consider the evidence, insight and experience around the use of messengers to change behavior and reflect on how this can be best applied to achieve conservation impact.
2. To identify which of the factors that make an influential messenger can be selected for, and which can be 'trained' for, and how to support SBCC Community of Practice members around both aspects through the development of 'Good Practice Guidelines'.
3. To identify and fill any knowledge gaps in understanding the factors influencing the effectiveness of messengers, to inform future interventions and directions for research.

3. Literature Review:

3.1 Factors that make messengers influential

Available literature reinforces the inherent complexity of factors influencing the success of messengers in disseminating information (message 'reach') or changing behavior (message 'resonance') and often involve an interplay of various elements.

In recent years, several theories have been developed to explain how ideas and 'innovations' such as a new purchasing preference, are diffused or adopted in a given social context. Success factors in the diffusion process include social network characteristics (Fell *et al*., 2009), the perceived benefits and potential values of the knowledge or innovation (Cain & Mittman, 2002) and the characteristics of messengers (Rogers, 2003).

Considering these various elements from a socio-ecological perspective, or one that looks at the various levels of influence on individual decision-making (cultural, social, political as well as community and intrinsic to the individual) will be crucial when designing Social and Behavioral Change Communications (SBCC) interventions. While this is acknowledged, an initial focus for discussion will be on the personal characteristics or attributes of messengers that seem influential in changing behavior, to help inform guidance around which of these can be recruited or trained for.

One of the earliest theories identifying the characteristics of influential messengers is Rogers' theory of Diffusion of Innovations. The theory describes how ideas spread among a group of people, and clarified individuals in five 'adopter' categories; innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority and laggards. The specific traits and personality types of each category are shown in Table 2. Useful psychographic 'handles' for each of these groups are highlighted in yellow; quick ways to think about the view they have the world and how they will view your ideas and program.

Table 2: Characteristics of Segments

Characteristics of Segments

Innovators	Early Adopters	Early Majority	Late Majority	Laggards
Venturesome	Respect	Deliberate	Skeptical	Traditional
High tolerance of risk	Opinion leaders	Very local perspective	Sensitive to peer pressure and norms	The traditionalists – tried and true
Fascinated with novelty	Well-connected socially and locally	Very engaged in peer networks	Cautious	Keepers of the wisdom
Willingness to travel to learn	Resources and risk tolerance to try new things	Rely on personal familiarity before adoption	Usually scarce resources	Near isolates in their social networks
Seen as mavericks, not opinion leaders	Self-conscious experimenters	How does this help me?	Minimize uncertainty of outcomes	Suspicious of innovation and change agents
Social networks transcend geographic boundaries	They are watched by others – and they know it		Want to see the proof locally	Adoption will not fail

One key to using diffusion theory effectively is to answer the questions people typically ask before trying something new or different.

o   How is this better than what I currently do?
o   How is it relevant to the way I go about my everyday life?
o   Is it simple enough for me to do?
o   Can I try it first?
o   Can I watch others and see what happens to them when they do it?

The second key point is that diffusion happens across these adopter categories—not from some central messenger: innovators find out things for themselves, but from there, early adopters learn from innovators, early majority people learn from early adopters, and so on. One of the least well understood properties of this diffusion process is that to reach a 'tipping point' (Gladwell, 2002), where an idea or practice 'takes off' in a population, we have to pay extra attention to ensuring that the communication links, or messengers, between the early adopters and early majority are understood and used to their fullest.

Feder and Savastano (2006) explored the extent to which attributes such as social status, wealth experience and skills affect an opinion leader's ability to disseminate information to an audience who are of lesser status, wealth, and skills. One key finding was that an opinion leader's ability to diffuse knowledge diminishes with socio-economic distance. This has relevance to the use of celebrities as role models or other proponents of alternative lifestyle habits, i.e. consumption choice. Celebrity 'credibility' to speak to certain topics has also been questioned by potential target audiences in consumer research processes. This is explored further in the next section.

3.1.1 Models on Celebrity Endorsement

A widely used definition of celebrity endorsement in the marketing literature is an individual who has public recognition and uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good, social cause or not-for-profit organisation by appearing with it in an advertisement (Knoll & Matthes, 2017). The model used to explain the affective, cognitive and behavioral impacts of communication with celebrity or non-celebrity endorsers is shown below.
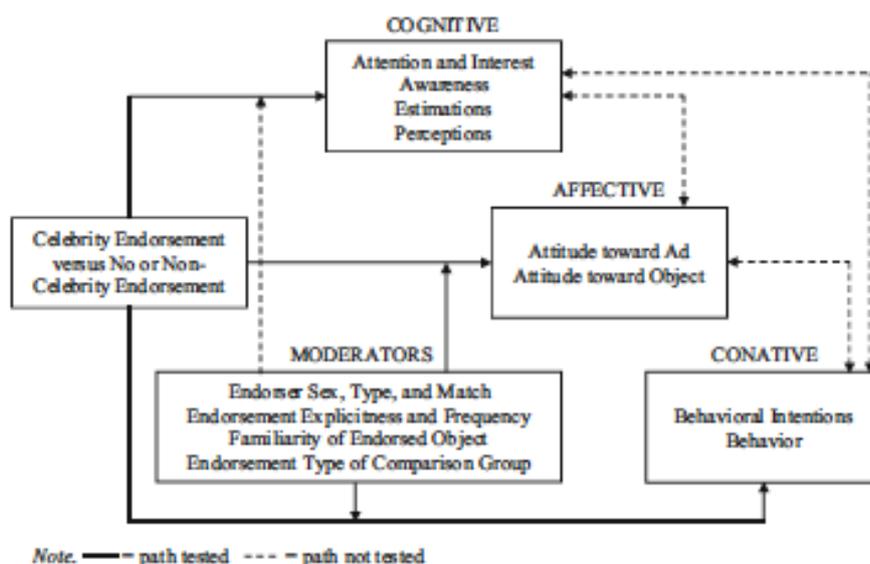
Celebrity endorsement effectiveness model adapted from Grewal et al. (1997)

Knoll and Matthes (2017) did a meta-analysis of 46 independent experimental research studies of celebrity endorsements that have looked at various parts of this model and found across studies:

- o There were no effects of celebrity endorsements on consumers' awareness.
- o Celebrity endorsements did have a positive effect on consumers' attitudes toward the endorsed object (product, issue or organisation).
- o There were no effects of celebrity endorsements on consumer behaviors.
- o Congruent endorsers (or those matched with the consumer group) had better results than incongruent ones (non-matched, i.e. with different attitudes, values and circumstances).
- o Implicit endorsements worked better than explicit ones.
- o Endorsements of objects that were unfamiliar to consumers performed better than endorsements of familiar ones.
- o Celebrity endorsements worked more than no endorsement. They performed less well when compared to quality seals or awards.

Two models that have been applied in the study of celebrity endorsement, are the Source Credibility Model and the Source Attractiveness Model (Amos, Holmes and Strutton, 2008).

The Source Credibility Model proposes that the effectiveness of messengers is dependent on the target audience's perception of the endorser's levels of expertise and trustworthiness (Dholakia and Stemthai 1977; Hovland *et al*., 1953; Hovland and Weiss 1951; Ohanian 1991; Solomon 1996).

The Source Attractiveness Model (Ohanian 1990) proposes that the attractiveness of a messenger or source is also important. The attractiveness of a messenger is determined by the perceived similarity, familiarity and likability on the part of the communication receiver. In simple terms, this means that consumers are more likely to listen to celebrities if they are perceived to bear resemblance to them (i.e. physically, due to ethnicity or other), or if they find them attractive (i.e. because of his/her physical appearance or behavior). An additional factor to consider is if the consumer is familiar with, or previously exposed to, 'knowledge' about that celebrity (Amos *et al*., 2008).
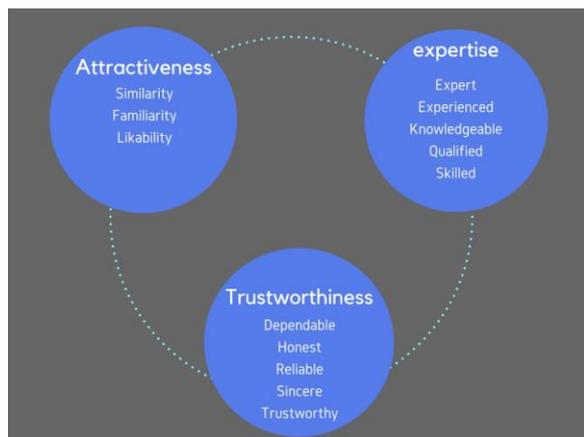
These two models have been supported by meta-analysis of many research studies in this area that find that celebrity trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness are among the most influential predictors for celebrity endorsement effectiveness. As a result, integrating the Source Attractiveness Model with the Source Credibility Model might be the most effective way to influence purchase intention, brand attitude, and attitude toward the advertisement (Amos *et al*., 2008). It should therefore be further explored if the Source Credibility Model would apply in the context of illegal wildlife trade; i.e. where consumer behaviors are linked to illegal activities.

In sum, while celebrity endorsement is commonly used by those issuing communications raising awareness of the threats to animals and appealing for compassion for their plight, literature evaluating its effectiveness is limited and the research findings that are available suggest both positive and negative effects. One study found that, in accordance with the Source Credibility Model, "celebrities considered to be knowledgeable about an issue generated significantly higher level of 'willingness to engage' (WTE) (Duthie *et al*., 2017)". They were less effective however at generating full campaign message recall when compared with non-celebrities. There is also the issue that in systematic reviews and meta-analyses of successful behavior change programs using celebrities, source or messenger characteristic do not emerge as important ingredients (Michie, van Stralen & West, 2011; Snyder, 2007; Wakefield, Loken & Hornik, 2010). Due to these results, the authors suggested that celebrity endorsement might not always be the best choice for conservation marketing campaigns and thorough research with priority groups should be conducted before adopting the strategy.

3.1.2 Non-celebrity Endorsers

In terms of engagement beyond celebrities and the attributes that should be sought, Tom *et al*., (1992) non-celebrity endorsers were shown to be more effective in generating the link to the product being endorsed than their celebrity equivalents. Through repeated exposure, consumers associated non-celebrity endorsers to the product much more strongly because celebrities were linked to many other things—not just the promoted products. A further study however by Mehta (1994), found that differences between consumers' behavior towards brands, advertising and intention to acquire the promoted items, were not statistically significant between celebrity and non-celebrity endorsers. Drawing from various reports and

findings, Erdogan (1999) concluded that compared to non-celebrity endorsers, celebrity endorsers were more effective in generating desirable outcomes including attitudes toward advertising and endorsed brands, and intention to purchase these brands as well as actual sales when the public persona matched the products and target audiences and the celebrity had not previously endorsed any other products. Implicit within this finding however, is that the celebrity is endorsing a legal product; further research would be required in relation to understand how this relates to an illegal product.

In other fields, case studies of successful use of non-celebrity endorsers have been well documented. For example, a social marketing campaign by UNFPA's HIV prevention programs which aimed to raise awareness about sexually transmitted disease and change behaviors around condom use, was implemented in targeted countries with high incidences of HIV infections, such as Zimbabwe, Malawi and Guyana. Recognising that women in these countries often feel embarrassed to purchase condoms in supermarkets, the social marketing campaign used hair salons and barbershops as one of their main communication channels. In addition to using hairdressers as messengers and training them to promote female condom use, the campaign also utilised billboards, radio spots and TV commercials to promote the message. In Zimbabwe alone, sales of condoms to females rose as a result, from about 900,000 in 2005 to more than 3 million in 2008 (UNFPA 2011).

Analysis around the success factors in these examples and case studies show that social network interventions take advantage of existing social support, social exchange and social influence process that exist within interpersonal relationships such as family, peer groups or social ties in other community settings like classrooms.

The importance of social networks as a factor in the prevention of HIV, obesity and tobacco use—among
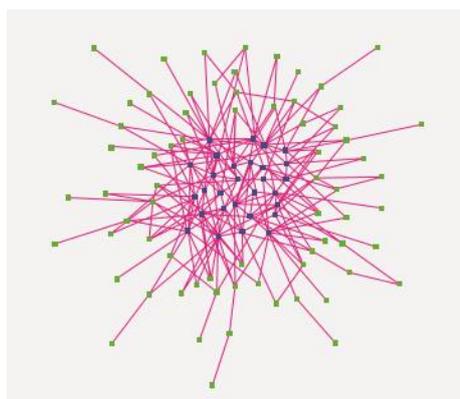
Figure 1 An example of a social network (Fell et al., 2009)

other issues—highlights findings that social networks play a role in influencing the prevalence of risk behaviors, not just in the transmission of infectious diseases. One insight from this work is that what is 'spreading' is a change in the social norm for the acceptability of the practice or risk behavior. There is growing evidence that interventions using structured approaches to disseminating messaging through messengers' social networks, have been successfully used to promote a range of health behaviors including HIV risk practices, smoking, exercise, dieting, family planning, bullying, and mental health (Latkin & Knowlton, 2015, p. 1).

Social networks, researchers argue, provide a powerful approach to behavior change because behaviors can be influenced through different mechanisms such as social norms, modeling and social rewards (Latkin & Knowlton, 2015). Network members 'can influence social norms by engaging in (descriptive norms) or endorsing a behavior (injunctive norms)' (Latkin & Knowlton, 2015, p. 7). In other words, 'talking about and modeling health behaviors can make social norms for engaging and endorsing these behaviors more salient, appear to be more prevalent and acceptable in the network, and hence influence behaviors.' (Latkin & Knowlton, 2015, p. 7).

However, what is important to note in the context of messengers is that it is changes in the perceptions of the positive or negative value of a behavior among people with close ties in social networks that is the likely precursor (or determinant) of individual behavior change or maintaining the status quo in free-living populations; not simply of people *in* a social network.

The key issues to understand and influence social networks involve three core network properties: (1) *degrees* or how many links each member in a network has with others; (2) *clustering*—how dense the connections between members of a network are; and (3) *average distances* or how far away from one another each person in a network is in terms of the number of links necessary to reach them (popularised as '6 degrees of separation' or 'the Kevin Bacon game').

One of the implications of this work with social networks is that people learn about and choose among behavioral options not only based on directly observing others in their social circle engage in behaviors and the consequences they experience, but also by whom their friends and associates connect with outside that proximal network and then bring back that information or those practices to others.

It is also true that the more dense the network (the more highly linked and clustered), and the fewer ties there are to people outside of it, the more resistant those people inside the network will be to changing behaviors or adopting new ideas (Lefebvre, 2011). Goyal (2007) concluded that variations in behaviors among individuals are related not only to the connections people have within the same social group but also to them being members of different groups. The work in social networks is especially relevant to people planning to use social media as an intervention tool: people are much more likely to be exposed to, respond to, and act as other people do in their social (media) networks. They are also more likely to accept and transmit information, both factual and fanciful.

Interestingly, approaches employing various aspects of social networks also provided some frameworks for improving behavioral impact. In one study investigating cooperative behaviors, researchers observed that cooperative behaviors were "contagious" in social networks and to increase the likelihood of the behaviors being spread, community-based initiatives should focus on those near the 'center' of the network (Figure 1). Being aware of the blueprint of community networks can enable practitioners to locate and work with key influencers (Rowson, Broome, and Jones, 2010). Other researchers have also proposed that there could be a number of ways in which influential individuals can be identified through social network structure and trained to become change agents. Systematic ways to identify community opinion leaders could include the reliance on nomination and ethnographic observation, as well as targeting those who score high on network attributes like centrality (Latkin & Knowlton, 2015).

It may be the case that popular figures, sometimes celebrities, may be influential with people in high priority target audiences for demand reduction communications. Community or religious leaders, artists, innovators or entrepreneurs, might also be appropriate to use to attract people's attention. Yet research findings consistently show that family members, friends and professional peers, the people who exist in the individual's social network, are the most potent influencers of a person's intention to act, take action and maintain the desired behavior over time.

Expert reflection, experience and perspectives around these various aspects is invited.

- How can we enhance linkages that already exist among people, organizations and communities to allow them to access, exchange, utilize and leverage the knowledge and resources of the others to reduce demand for illegal wildlife products and change consumer choice?
- How do we help develop, nurture and sustain new types of linkages that bring together like-minded people, mission-focused organizations and communities that share interests to address common problems in reducing demand for wildlife products?
- How do we identify, encourage and enable the many different types of indigenous supporters of our efforts that are found in social networks, so that they can be more effective in promoting our messages, behaviors and policies?
- How do we go about weaving together existing social networks of individuals, organizations and communities to create new sources of power and inspiration to address reducing demand for wildlife products?
- How does a networked view of the world disrupt our usual ways of thinking about and engaging the people, messengers, organizations and communities with which we usually work? What are the insights we can gain from this perspective? Also, how can established understanding and perceptions around networks be remapped to maximise the opportunities for impact with demand reduction communications?

Key Points

To assure that an idea or practice becomes known and acceptable in a larger proportion of the population, attention should be given to the communication links, or messengers, between the early adopters and early majority.

Research evaluating the effectiveness of celebrities is limited and the findings that are available suggest limited impact with behavior change, and otherwise a combination of both positive and negative effects.

There is growing evidence that interventions that disseminate messages through social networks can successfully promote a range of behaviors.

The research is consistent that family members, friends and professional peers, the people who exist in an individual's social network, are the most potent influencers of a person's intention to act, take action and maintain the desired behavior over time.

4. Approaches to engaging and managing relationships with messengers

Strategies in developing and managing relationships with messengers are crucial to ensure that behavior change programs are cost effective and result in expected outcomes. As individuals, each messenger is unique and hence there is unlikely to be a "one size fits all" approach to working with them. Nevertheless, broad guidelines or best practice approaches to messenger engagement, to enhance benefits and mitigate associated risks, can be discussed.

Marketing literature has highlighted that although celebrities can be beneficial in many ways, the use of celebrity endorsers is not without risk, and may not be the most effective way to change choice. Further, a sudden change of image or a drop-in popularity and credibility, for example, can markedly reverse the positive benefits of celebrity endorsement (Erdogan, 1999).

Similarly, one study has shown that negative information about a celebrity can transfer to the products they promote, resulting in strong detrimental effect on consumers' perceptions and brand perception and attachment (Amos *et al*., 2008). Finally, there is a concern that consumers will focus their attention on celebrities instead of the brand being promoted (Rossiter and Percy, 1987).

Table 3 summarises examples of potential advantages and hazards, as well as preventive tactics associated with celebrity endorsement, that might be further discussed;

Table 3: Pro and Cons of Celebrity Endorsement Strategy (Erdogan, 1999)

Potential Advantages	Potential Hazards	Preventive Tactics
Increased attention	Overshadow the brand	Pre-testing and careful planning
Image polishing	Public controversy	Buying insurance and putting provision clauses in contracts
Brand introduction	Image change and overexposure	Explaining what is their roles and putting clause to restrict endorsements for other brands
Brand repositioning	Image change and loss of public recognition	Examining what life-cycle stage the celebrity is in and how long this stage is likely to continue
Underpin global campaigns	Expensive	Select celebrities who are appropriate for global target audience, not because they are 'hot' in all market audience.

As in advertising, the non-profit sector has engaged with celebrity endorsers who promote initiatives on various levels. According to Duthie *et al*., (2017), despite relying heavily on celebrities in SBCC campaigns, there may not be a clear celebrity endorsement strategy.

What's often the case in conservation marketing is that celebrities are often chosen based on goodwill and personal connections. Organisations then create a "wish list" of celebrities they want to engage and work down that list until they find someone who is willing and available. As a result, organizations risk identifying a celebrity who may be willing but exert little or even negative influence on their campaigns (Duthie *et al*., 2017).

Developing a clear celebrity engagement strategy will thus be crucial for conservation practitioners and a useful approach that conservation NGOs can learn from comes from UNICEF. At UNICEF, a dedicated 'celebrity section' of the Division of Communications oversees and manages celebrity endorsement programs. Structured approaches are involved in the recruitment and management of the relationship with those 'high-profile individuals who enlist their volunteer services and support to the UN' (UNICEF, 2010, p.7). They are called e.g. 'Messengers of Peace' and 'Goodwill Ambassadors'.

In order to ensure that UNICEF's mission fit with the celebrity's interest, any relationships between the two parties begin with a 'courtship period', a 6-12 months period in which the celebrity is asked to learn about UNICEF's cause and participate in some field visits. Official designation of the title follows a successful 'courtship period' and at this point, the parties enter

into a formal signed agreement in which the expected roles and commitment of both parties are clearly stated. UNICEF will also provide a 'relationship manager' who will 'keep the Goodwill Ambassador informed of UNICEF''s successes and needs and goals' and 'create a customized strategic plan that supports the Goodwill Ambassador's interests and UNICEF''s priorities' (UNICEF, 2010, p. 10).

Certainly aspects of this systematic approach, such as a structured recruitment and management process to build mutually rewarding relationships with celebrities, can be useful for conservation NGOs to adapt or replicate. However, it is also important to keep in mind the different issues at hand. Many conservation NGOs are faced with the urgency of issues such as the wildlife 'poaching crisis' and as a result challenges around building trust and good working relationship in a reasonable timeframe must be overcome.

Another case study provides insights into strategies to engage with non-celebrity messengers. In research exploring the diffusion of environmental behaviors, researchers found that through some set of attributes and characteristics, 'catalytic individuals' were able to help foster the adoption of new behaviors (Fell *et al*., 2009, p7). Catalytic individuals are those with 'predilection for gathering and considering information' about new ideas or behaviors and 'typically play a key role in establishing the technical credibility of the innovation' (Fell *et al*., 2009, p7). Note the similarities in these descriptions with those of the 'innovator' described earlier. Unlike the innovators, however, catalysts also try to directly influence people by persuading them that an innovation is good or bad, or more indirectly by people admiring them and wanting to be like them (that is, they are 'models' for alternative ways of thinking and/or acting).

Through studying this group of individuals researchers argued that it could be possible to design a program to engage with 'catalytic individuals' in order for them to act as messengers to promote pro-environmental behaviors in a given society. Other groups have pointed to the effectiveness of recruiting new practitioners of a behavior (e.g., avoiding illegal wildlife products) and providing brief training for them to become advocates of this behavior (something that not only leverages peer influence in social networks, but also strengthens the behavior in the advocates themselves; Piotrow *et al*, 1997).

What's more interesting is that evidences showed that "catalytic individuals" and "influencer" on an online community platform were highly motivated by altruism (Fell et al., 2009) rather than financial incentives (Marketing Group Zurich, 2018). As a result, a feasible engagement program would need to convince them that the proposed behavior would offer more responsibility to the community or positively benefit the people in their social network. Support materials and sufficient information also need to be provided for them to be able to promote the idea confidently.

Furthermore, best practice evidence suggested that a particular training might also be appropriate. In promoting health behavior change, an approach that has been used was to promote social network members in talking about and encouraging certain behaviors. Once appropriate individuals or messengers are selected, training in communication skills are provided so that messengers are able to initiate and maintain conversation about target behaviors. Training to provide verbal reward and information, in ways that are credible for health behaviors, and that does not elicit resistance or challenge a sense of self-efficacy, will also be necessary (Latkin & Knowlton, 2015).

Overall, it is evident that engagement with messengers is a critical, if human resource intensive task, in order to achieve meaningful behavior change in SBCC initiatives.

It requires knowledge and thought at the project strategy and design stages, and when recruiting particular ambassadors, champions or others aiming to achieve behavior change message reach and resonance. Expert Roundtable discussion will invite reflections on the evidence presented, and seek further insights from the extensive experience of Experts in the room, and to inform the development of subsequent Good Practice Guidelines accordingly.

Key Points

Developing and managing relationships with messengers are crucial to ensure that behavior change programs are cost effective and result in expected outcomes.

There are well-documented potential advantages and hazards, as well as preventive tactics, associated with celebrity endorsement.

Conservation NGOs can learn from UNICEF, among other NGOs, for developing a celebrity engagement strategy.

There is some evidence for the possible effectiveness of designing a program to engage with "catalytic individuals" in order for them to act as messengers to promote pro-environmental behaviors in a given society.

5. Expert reflections are specifically invited around the following

- What other evidence exists around the messenger attributes (personal character, socio-economic) that are effective in influencing behavior? If not all these attributes are intrinsic or 'natural'; can we think about training people to become good messengers as a way to help us scale up our effort?
- Who can be messengers, when and how can we identify and select messengers that would be effective for different purposes or suitable to our programs?
- What are the cultural variations in the role of the messenger and its related effectiveness across geographies? Do attributes of "influential" messengers vary across culture, especially in 'collectivist cultures' such as those of China and Vietnam where major markets for illegal wildlife products are located?
- Do noncompliance and illegality have any impact on the effectiveness of messengers? Or are there any specific messenger attributes that may be more influential in the context of non-compliance and illegality? And what are the role and characteristics of law enforcement officials to issuing messaging to shape individual motivation?
- What are some successful and innovative case studies, best practice, past experience, opportunity and risk that we can learn from within the conservation sector and beyond that are illustrative and applicable?
- What are some of the risk and mitigation strategies that should be considered when engaging with messengers?
- What should be the approach to engaging or managing the relationships with messengers? How best to recruit or would it make more sense to engage those willing volunteers? Are there any success stories or sample of successful engagement programs or processes involved that could be shared?

- Should training people to become good messengers be something NGOs should consider incorporating into their celebrity engagement strategies? If so, how should such individuals be selected and what kind of support or training should be provided to messengers?
- In a situation where motivation to participate is less clear as in the case of non-celebrity messengers (business leaders, family, friends and peers etc.), what might be included in the engagement program to increase incentive or encourage involvement from this group?
- In the face of the urgency of the wildlife "poaching crisis", what could the approach to create trust and build meaningful and mutually beneficial relationships in a reasonable timeframe?

5. Next Steps and Further Information

The content of this Briefing Paper will be considered further through Roundtable presentations and discussion, and expert reflections and input will be welcomed. The results of this process will help to inform the development of 'Good Practice Guidelines' on effective messengers, which will be shared with the SBCC Community of Practice through www.changewildlifeconsumers.org. The overall aim will be to enhance the impact of SBCC and other demand reduction communications.

Further information about this Briefing Paper or the Expert Roundtable, is available from:

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Annex 1: Associated Reading Materials

1. Amos, C., Holmes, G. and Strutton, D. (2008). Exploring the relationship between celebrity endorser effects and advertising effectiveness. *International Journal of Advertising*, 27(2), pp.209-234.
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