Building Public Support for the Sustainable Development Goals

A Strategic Communications Brief

Table of Contents

Introduction

This brief offers a set of framing recommendations for Bread for the World and its partners to use in developing a messaging strategy to build public understanding of and support for their efforts to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (Global Goals or SDGs), which were endorsed by 193 countries, including the United States, during the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015.[*]

Communicating about the Global Goals presents a unique opportunity to engage the US public in "big picture" thinking about the ways in which social problems that to non-experts may appear to be unrelated— hunger and climate change, for example, or education and criminal justice—are in fact deeply intertwined. This opportunity is not without challenges. At its core, the Global Goals project postulates that making progress on one social issue will hasten progress on others and that progress must be made on all goals in order to achieve the vision of an equitable, sustainable society. To build support for the goals while still emphasizing its anti-hunger mission, Bread for the World must nest its messages about hunger-related issues within the larger SDG story. The public, however, is unaccustomed to thinking about social problems as a complex network of conditions, each affecting the rest. Nor do advocacy groups, the media, or American culture as a whole usually frame social problems in this way. Instead, the weighty issues tackled by the SDGs are routinely depicted and discussed as discrete, standalone challenges and problems. As a result, members of the public have difficulty reasoning about the causes of, and solutions to, large-scale problems, relying instead on preexisting default assumptions about how the world and specific issues work. These default assumptions frequently constrain people's thinking and keep them from seeing the bigger picture. Countering these dominant ways of interpreting social issues will be key to increasing the public's support for SDG-related work.

The FrameWorks Institute employs a multi-method social-science approach, called Strategic Frame Analysis®, to analyze the gaps between how members of a field and members of the public make sense of social issues. We then develop and test communications tools, such as appeals to widely shared values, that improve people's ability to access and use information in their understanding of and decision-making about an issue—why the issue matters, how it works, who's responsible, and how it can be addressed—in order to foster richer, more informed public discourse and increase people's support for the actions necessary to address an issue and improve outcomes. This research process results in a framing strategy that can be used (and has been tested) across audiences, because it anticipates non-experts' commonly shared cognitive holes and assumptions about an issue and employs a number of "translation" devices

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[*] The 2030 Sustainable Development Goals are often referred to as the Global Goals, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, or the Global Agenda.

that make complex topics easier to understand and engage in. (For more information about FrameWorks' research process, please see Appendix B.)

Using both our analysis of the field's current practices in communicating about the SDGs and FrameWorks' existing body of research, we have identified a set of framing strategies that Bread and its partners can employ to communicate more effectively about the SDGs.

The brief is laid out in four parts: first, we describe the research base used to derive the recommendations. Next, we inventory the primary framing strategies that organizations are currently employing to argue for implementation of the SDGs and the likely effect of these strategies on public engagement with SDG-related issues. The brief then outlines several of the deeply embedded habits of mind, or "cultural models," that shape people's thinking on, and often obstruct their ability to reason productively about, SDG-related issues. We also explain how the framing strategies currently in use by the field may activate these cultural models. Last, we offer a series of framing recommendations culled from FrameWorks' extensive body of framing research across a broad range of subjects related to the SDGs. These recommendations have been tested empirically for their ability to

- expand non-experts' understanding of the structural or system-level causes and consequences of social problems

- engage people in productive thinking about policy-based solutions, and

- move public support on a range of SDG-related issues.

All of the research informing this brief is available online at www.frameworksinstitute.org.

Evidence Base

This brief represents the initial stages of Strategic Frame Analysis®. The approach begins by documenting existing communications practices on an issue and investigating the patterns of thinking that structure public opinion on it. The report also provides an initial set of recommendations, based on prior FrameWorks research, that can be used to navigate the challenges that experts and advocates are likely to experience when communicating with the US public about implementing the Global Goals domestically. The ultimate aim of this process is to find the most effective strategies for inviting the public into conversations about pressing policy topics, so that community decision-making can be more informed by research and evidence. Two main sources of data inform the research findings and framing recommendations included in this report:

Materials Review. This report reviews more than 30 documents sampled from 17 organizations working on or communicating about the SDGs or related issues (see the Appendix for a list of organizations included in the analysis). Bread for the World staff members sent FrameWorks a list of 13 organizations working on the SDGs, and FrameWorks staff added an additional four organizations to that list. FrameWorks then gathered several communication examples from each organization, including press releases, blog posts, and annual reports. The sample includes three types of organizations that regularly communicate with non-expert publics about the sustainable development goals:

1. Organizations like Bread for the World that are communicating directly with the American public about the need to adopt and implement the sustainable development goals

2. Organizations that are communicating with publics in other industrialized nations (Canada and the United Kingdom) about the need to adopt the SDGs

3. The United Nations (specifically, samples of public-facing UN communications about issues related to those covered by the SDGs).

FrameWorks research on topics related to the Sustainable Development Goals. This brief reviews and synthesizes more than 12 years of the Institute's research, on subjects ranging from early childhood development to justice reform, human services, education and education reform, race and racial inequality, climate change and environmental health, and budgets and taxes. The results of this review are used to provide preliminary reframing recommendations to those working to develop an evidence-based communications strategy to promote implementation of the sustainable development goals in the United States.

With these data, the FrameWorks Institute is able to identify patterns in existing communications practice, evaluate the effectiveness of these practices, and offer a set of recommendations that will help communicators navigate these challenges.

Current SDG Framing Strategies

In this section, we identify existing framing strategies the field uses to advocate for implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. FrameWorks staff analyzed communication materials produced by various groups, including Bread for the World, in order to identify the field's current framing practices and analyze their likely effect on public engagement with messages about the SDGs. Across the sample, we noted several patterns or "framing habits" that our research suggests will impede the American public's accurate interpretation of SDG-related communications. In this sample, we find:

Values are largely absent. Approximately two-thirds of the communication samples we reviewed do not use values-based framing, which is a means of establishing a collective stake in responding to a problem or a reason for all people to engage with an issue. For example, one message begins, "After three years of extensive planning, consultation, and negotiations, 193 countries have come together in support of a new universal and integrated framework for global development, unprecedented in its scope and breadth of commitment."[1] To a non-expert, an opening like this leaves a key question unanswered: "Why does this matter?"—a question that our analysis finds is seldom addressed in the SDG communication samples. By opening with facts—how long it took how many countries to reach an agreement—rather than with a value that provides a strong and resonant answer to the question of why the agreement matters to society, this example misses the big-picture context that members of the public need in order to keep reading and be persuaded by the message. Absent a values appeal, audiences not directly affected by an issue are less likely to see its relevance or importance and to be moved to support the solutions required to address the issue.

When values are used, they are "scatter-shot." Those materials that do use values tend to strew multiple values throughout a message, effectively confusing the message and diluting the power of values framing through a scatter-bomb approach. For example, a single page of a report in the sample included all of the following values: prosperity, interdependence, fulfilling national potential, innovation, and "profound moral reasons."[2] Values appeals help people understand why an issue matters, but too many values in one communication can muddy the water: if an issue is about everything, then it is essentially about nothing. Instead, using a limited number of values within and especially across communications can strengthen messaging by concentrating the dose of a value and then amplifying it through repetition.

The field is appealing to *Interdependence*. A few of the communication samples emphasized interdependence (the idea that what happens to one nation or group affects other nations and groups) as a reason to support the SDGs. This was particularly true for Canadian-based organizations. FrameWorks' research has found mixed results with this value. While it showed a statistically significant ability to move the Canadian public's attitudes and policy preferences on issues related to addiction and child mental

health[3], in our US-based experiments, appeals to interdependence failed to improve people's support for policy measures related to several of the SDGs, including climate change as well as early childhood and education issues[4]. Further research is required to determine if the interdependence value is able to consistently move public thinking about a range of SDG issues in a positive direction.

The SDG framing strategies include comparisons between nations. Given the global nature of the SDGs, it is unsurprising that some of the communication samples compare the United States' performance in certain policy areas to that of other countries. Consider this passage, for instance: "The United States has the dubious distinction of having the second highest relative child poverty rate among 35 industrialized nations. Only Romania's rate is higher—and by only 0.5 percent."[5] Perhaps counterintuitively, FrameWorks' research on communicating about education and justice reform has shown that stoking Americans' sense of global competition can actually depress their support for policy solutions by reinforcing beliefs about American exceptionalism.[6] Though we have not tested this frame's effects in SDG-related messages, the negative results from prior experiments suggest that such country-to-country comparisons may not be a productive strategy to engage Americans and move their thinking on SDG issues.

The field's appeals to *Human Potential* are promising. A handful of documents in the sample appeal to the need to create the conditions that allow everyone to achieve their full potential. Bread for the World's communications included in the sample lead the way in this regard with values statements such as "a world where everyone can fulfill their potential in a peaceful, healthy environment"[7] and "every one of us should have the opportunity to develop our talents and pursue our dreams"[8]. In experimental testing across a number of issue areas related to the SDGs, FrameWorks' research has found that this value has a robust effect in moving people's policy attitudes and preferences.[9] It is important to note that uses of the human potential value should highlight the community as the beneficiary of an individual's potential, rather than individuals themselves. Both benefits exist, of course, but strategic framing is a process of making intentional choices, and if the goal is to build public will, then the public nature of the issue must be stressed. Expressing the benefits of implementing the SDGs domestically in collective, rather than individual, terms is an important part of a strategy to establish them as a public good.

Causation is invisible. Roughly half of the materials in the sample lacked any explanation of the problems that have led to the development of the SDGs. These documents presuppose a level of understanding that likely does not coincide with the American public's level of knowledge about the spectrum of social issues supported by the SDGs and the inefficacy of treating them as discrete problems of concern only to specific populations. Without a clear statement of the problem—how are these social issues interrelated and why must they be addressed simultaneously and cooperatively?—there is no visible *raison d'etre* for the SDGs, which has implications for the public's level of support. This is a major finding of this analysis and suggests that organizations must do more to effectively explain the problems that the

SDGs are designed to address. Note that explanations of the problem must be accompanied by explanations of their solutions, for reasons we discuss below.

The problem is abstract—and enormous. Those materials that do make mention of the problems that gave rise to the SDGs provide little to no explanation. In these documents, causation is attributed in passing to a variety of factors: poverty and inequality, policy silos, the impacts of global urbanization, inadequate funding and support, and the lack of a well-coordinated and comprehensive plan among numerous stakeholders. Such sweeping categories and discussions of causality, especially when unaccompanied by an explanation tying cause to effect, make the problem sound amorphous and overwhelming. For experts, the naming of these factors may be acceptable shorthand, since they presumably share deep background knowledge of how they work and can be addressed. Non-expert audiences, however, lack that context and as a result are likely to conclude that the problems underlying the SDGs are too massive or entrenched to solve.

The presentation of the problem and its solutions are not well-matched. The communication samples revealed another communications trap in the balance of space allotted to problems and solutions. In general, SDG messages tip the balance too much to one side of the equation or the other: documents either spend too much space describing the problem, leaving little room to talk about the SDGs as solutions, or they focus almost exclusively on the SDGs without explaining what problems they will address and how. A framing rule of thumb is to give equal space to the explanation of both the problem and its solutions—this balance helps to convey the urgency of an issue while still fostering a sense of efficacy and optimism that appropriately scaled solutions exist and can be effective in improving outcomes.

The systems and processes underlying social problems—how things "work"—are unclear. Perhaps the biggest challenge in communicating about the SDGs is building public understanding of the interrelatedness of the goals and the ways in which working towards any one of the goals will advance many of the other goals, too. Existing SDG communications overwhelmingly presume a depth of knowledge about the complex systems that create and perpetuate global challenges that FrameWorks' research indicates the American public simply does not possess. To understand, for example, why the SDGs include ocean conservation, the public first needs an easy-to-grasp explanation of how the ocean affects environmental and human health, economic well-being, security, and so on: what affects what, and with what consequences for society. Strategically developing non-experts' understanding of these complicated mechanisms and relationships can increase their support for the SDGs by helping them to think more like experts do about these issues.

"Success" is amorphous. The communication materials reviewed do little to explain what the successful attainment of the goals will look like or even what will constitute success for a particular nation's or

organization's efforts to work towards the goals. The majority of the documents refer to success as the attainment of the SDGs generally or of specific SDGs (e.g., "the eradication of extreme poverty"), but to the average American, immersed in culturally pervasive beliefs such as the inevitability of poverty or the impossibility of solving large-scale social problems, such declarations are essentially meaningless without a more concrete, practical illustration of how such broad objectives are feasible.

The field's data lack important interpretation cues. Several of the sample communications use data— lots of it—to make the case for the SDGs. These data are rarely, if ever, accompanied by the kinds of framing cues that non-experts need to make unfamiliar data meaningful. Consider this quote, for example: "The proportion of the population suffering from hunger declined from 15 percent in 2000-2002 to 11 percent in 2014-2016."[10] Without interpretive assistance, the 11 and 15 percent figures will mean little to members of the general public: Is 15 percent of the population more than "normal" or less? Likewise, if left unframed, a four-percent difference over fourteen years may appear to be a negligible result. The value of such data in making a case for the SDGs or their effects is likely to be lost on non-experts who lack the context to interpret them accurately.

At best, FrameWorks' research indicates that many of these current framing strategies are ineffective ways to build the American public's support for the SDGs. At worst, they may have the opposite effect, depressing public will to work towards the goals. To understand why these strategies are unproductive, communicators need to know how the public already thinks about and makes sense of issues related to the SDGs. The section below summarizes relevant findings from our cultural models research to show how the communications strategies analyzed above are likely to interact with non-experts' preexisting perceptions, and with what results.

The Field's Communications Challenges

Whether a framing strategy is effective depends on its ability to break through, or navigate around, the longstanding, widely shared, preexisting assumptions about "how the world works" that the public brings to any discussion of social issues. These enduring, well-established default modes of reasoning about a problem and its solution—what anthropologists call "cultural models"—act as cognitive shortcuts that help our brains to process incoming information quickly, and they influence how people respond to messages. The problem is that this mental efficiency comes at a cost, since some of these defaults act as barriers to accessing new information, or can lead to interpretations that are at odds with the intended takeaway of a communication. The good news, however, is that these models are activated by the cues in a message: words, turns of phrase, images, messengers, and so on. Knowing what cultural models the public is likely to use to reason about an issue gives communicators a strategic advantage, helping them to avoid cues that may lead to unhelpful interpretations and to choose others that can engage people more deeply.

Below, we identify and describe several cultural models that our research suggests are likely to be activated by the framing strategies we identified in our review of the SDG communication materials. Because our research has found these dominant models to be ineffective or even problematic in helping the public to think more deeply about SDG-related issues, Bread staff, leaders, and partners should avoid communications cues and framing strategies that may activate them:

- **Individualism.** The American public shares a deeply held belief that life outcomes are determined primarily by individuals' good or bad choices and their level and application of willpower and drive. When people reason from this perspective, they have difficulty seeing how social determinants and contextual factors influence and constrain individuals' choices and outcomes. Consequently, they have difficulty thinking about solutions that move beyond educating individuals to make better individual choices. They also tend not to understand the importance and collective benefit of social policies and programs designed to address the contexts and systems that shape people's outcomes. This has implications for communicating about the SDGs: for example, SDG-related messages that appeal to individual-level benefits (for example, human potential for the sake of individuals' own benefit) will reinforce people's tendency to reason about large-scale social issues through the narrow lens of individual drive and personal outcomes. Similarly, when SDG communications neglect to explain what solutions are needed and how they will work, the public is likely to default to the conclusion that the primary fix is for people to change their behavior at an individual level.

    Framing strategy: When communicating about the Global Goals, steer clear of individualist cues, such as emotional stories that focus on one person's experience or that

allow people to see individual willpower, drive, or choice as the factor that explains an outcome.

- **"Black box" of well-being.** Taken as a whole, the Global Goals strive to advance "well-being," broadly defined, for both US and global populations. A majority of Americans, however, do not understand the contextual, policy, or systemic factors that support well-being and have difficulty defining it as anything more than financial self-sufficiency and good health. When thinking of well-being in this limited way, Americans employ the ideal of the "self-made person" and conclude that everyone should be able to achieve financial stability through employment and "good" saving habits, without any help, and that good health is available to anyone who chooses to diet and exercise. From this perspective, people who need financial assistance or experience poor health lack the requisite discipline, willpower, and drive necessary to achieve well-being.

  This narrow conception of well-being leaves little room for people to think about the many other factors—such as community safety, food security, access to humane and equitable justice systems, healthy environments, educational quality, workforce development, and community resources, among others—that contribute to national, community, family, or individual well-being. When the social or system-level processes that can lead to good outcomes are invisible, the public fills in its own, often inaccurate, explanations about those outcomes. To change the way people think about large-scale social problems, SDG-related communications should take every opportunity to define the term "well-being" in order to fill in the public's cognitive holes about how well-being works, what challenges it, and how system-level factors support it.

  > *Framing strategy:* Stretch your audiences' conceptions of "well-being" by offering examples that illustrate the many social factors that contribute to well-being and explain how interventions that address contexts can improve well-being.

- **Government is incompetent and wasteful.** Americans across the political spectrum share a deep skepticism about government's ability to solve large-scale or deeply embedded social problems. This perception of government is reinforced by the public's fuzzy understanding of the difference between private and public sector missions, its association of "government" with crooked politicians, and its pervasive consumerist orientation, through which individuals evaluate government on the basis of its ability to, in exchange for their personal tax dollars, deliver services that benefit them directly. Because the SDGs represent efforts by governmental signatories, including the United States, people's unproductive ways of thinking about government will likely influence how members of the public interpret SDG-related communications, especially those that emphasize the role of government entities in working towards the goals. For example, several of the documents we reviewed issued directives to national governments who signed onto the

goals: e.g., "Countries are not free to pick and choose among the goals," "The Canadian government needs to see itself as a 'systems architect' that is responsible for facilitating an overall societal approach," or "The Government should commit to producing a biennial report on policy coherence." These types of cues—the subtle tone of reproach, the implicit suggestion that these governments are already failing to carry out their responsibilities—are likely to backfire by inadvertently reinforcing people's strong belief that government is incapable. And since the SDGs deal with social problems whose mitigation or elimination cannot be divorced wholesale from government policies, it is important that communicators choose framing strategies that build the public's belief in government's ability to be part of the solution.

> *Framing strategy:* Avoid words and turns of phrase that explicitly or implicitly perpetuate negative connotations about government. Choose language that reinforces the public sector's mission and ability to advance the common good and reminds people of their role as citizens participating in our governance.

- **Everybody's/Nobody's Responsible**: A key question frequently left unanswered in the SDG communication samples is "who's going to fix it?" (This is in part the result of the inattention paid to explaining how the SDGs will be accomplished.) FrameWorks' research on a number of issue areas has found that when Americans are left on their own to attribute responsibility for social change, they tend to conclude that everyone's responsible, e.g., "It's up to all of us to save the environment." In the public's mind, "everyone's responsible" actually means "everyone's responsible for themselves and their actions," which effectively means that nobody is responsible for large-scale change. Because non-experts generally lack the sophisticated understanding of policy-based solutions that experts may take for granted, this blanket "we" makes systemic solutions invisible, along with the experts, policy makers, and collective civic action necessary to enact them. The everybody's/nobody's responsible model dilutes people's sense of social and collective responsibility. The SDG messaging analyzed here lacks the explanatory power to steer the public towards more concrete attributions of responsibility. Without a better understanding of which stakeholders must be accountable for addressing social issues and a robust sense of social responsibility, the public is less likely to see the need to support the efforts of those stakeholders.

> *Framing strategy:* Don't leave attribution of responsibility to chance or relegate it to a vague "we." Be specific in naming the roles assigned to various stakeholders and in explaining the necessity of policy change and social responsibility in order to see progress.

- **American Exceptionalism:** Across multiple issue areas, FrameWorks research has found that, when communicators frame issues in terms of global competition, it triggers two very unproductive models. On one hand, it activates nostalgia for an imagined "golden age" that can

never be regained—from this perspective, people conclude that our nation's current problems are insurmountable. Paradoxically, a global competition frame can also trigger a culturally prevalent sense of American exceptionalism, from which people reason that the US is already "the best" country in the world and, therefore, nothing need be done to make it better. In both cases, the outcome is public disengagement from the issue—the problem either can't be solved or doesn't exist. What's more, cuing up people's fears about US dominance on the global scene can spark xenophobic reactions and zero-sum thinking (see below). We noted several instances in the SDG communication materials in which the US is compared unfavorably to other nations or its social problems are made congruent to those in countries not typically equated to the US, as in this example, "The overall vision of the SDGs is to create a world where no one is left behind—no one on the streets of Ferguson or Baltimore, no one in the remote villages of Malawi or in conflict-torn Syria."[11] While these comparisons may hold validity, the likely frame effect of this tactic is the public's dismissiveness of the underlying message. We are not Syria, people will reason, and if things have gotten that bad, there is nothing that we can do fix it.

> *Framing strategy:* When communicating about the SDGs, avoid direct comparisons between the US and other countries. Instead, focus on what the SDGs mean for the US and why they matter. For more on how to talk about inequity and disparities productively, see Recommendation #2 (*Fairness Across Places*) below.

- **Zero-Sum Thinking:** Americans hold a deep-seated belief that channeling resources towards one disadvantaged group necessarily means taking resources from another. This "piece of the pie" mentality, in which the amount of available resources is static and groups must fight each other for the biggest portion, poses communications challenges for advocates championing efforts to reduce disparities, which is the fundamental goal of the SDGs. For organizations like Bread for the World that work to address inequities both domestically and internationally, this default model can be activated by messages comparing the US to other countries, but messages measuring subgroups within the US against each other can have the same effect, as can messages that inadvertently reinforce people's belief that resources are scarce. When Americans reason from a zero-sum model, they tend to rationalize disparities by attributing their existence to individual character traits or innate differences among populations or groups. This default also encourages people to view inequity as a fundamental and unavoidable fact of life; in a world of limited resources, they reason, the existence of winners and losers is natural, normal, and inevitable. Such rationalizations limit the public's motivation to tackle disparities.

> *Framing strategy:* Do not focus on resource limitations or competition and stay away from stories that highlight the personal or cultural traits of individuals or groups (e.g.,

"his triumphant spirit," "their devotion to family"), which can remind audiences of preexisting biases or perceptions about specific groups.

- **Modern Life Is Tough:** The SDGs are intended to mitigate or eliminate a spectrum of social problems, from demographic change to climate change. Americans' thinking about these problems, however, and how best to solve them—or whether they can be solved at all—is shaped by a widely shared belief that these challenges are, for better or worse, the price we pay for modern life. Lacking a detailed understanding of the mechanisms underpinning social problems like poverty, environmental degradation, injustice, and infrastructural decay, members of the public identify time as the common denominator: it used to be better and now it's not. This line of thinking leads people to conclude that modernity itself—its faster pace, technological conveniences, greater mobility, globalized economy, and so on—is the culprit, but one that also brings benefits that outweigh any harm. This cultural model leads to disengagement and shoulder shrugs . . . after all, we can't stop progress. Two points are especially relevant to SDG messages: First, about half of the SDG materials we reviewed do not explain causal factors, a framing practice that can lead people to fill in those blanks with this cultural model—"Why do we have problems? Because they are an unavoidable feature of modernity." Second, it is possible that messages that cue up the "modernity is tough" default may also foster the zero-sum and American exceptionalism models. For example, reasoning that certain social problems are the price we pay for the benefits of modernity may lead people to further reason that this inevitable sacrifice must be borne by someone, a version of the zero-sum extrapolation that "winners and losers are normal and natural."

  > *Framing strategy:* Don't leave your audience guessing at the origins of a social issue and avoid crisis-oriented temporal cues (e.g., "worse than ever before," "at historic proportions," "unprecedented disaster").

- **Fatalism:** A major challenge communicators face in talking about the SDGs is the American public's profound pessimism about our ability to solve longstanding social problems. This deeply ingrained fatalism—the sense that any attempt to improve things will be futile, so we shouldn't try—cuts across issue areas and weakens the public's will to act. When reasoning from this perspective, people have difficulty identifying feasible solutions and ultimately disengage out of a sense that the problem is too overwhelming to fix. Crisis-oriented cues can feed the public's fatalism. The tendency in some SDG communications to build the case for the SDGs with staggering statistics or to use extremely urgent or sweeping language to compel action (e.g., "a seismic shift in the way the world tackles poverty"[12]) may have the opposite effect, overwhelming the audience and weakening their will to act.

Framing strategy: Fatalism can be triggered by an imbalance in the presentation of problems and their solutions, so aim to pair every explanation of a problem with its solution in order to foster optimism that practical remedies exist.

Knowing what top-of-mind models the public is likely to use to interpret messages makes it easier to choose cues that can steer the conversation in a helpful direction—and to avoid those that won't. The framing recommendations detailed below also work to redirect the public away from these default patterns and towards more helpful, but latent, avenues of thought.

Recommendations

FrameWorks has developed a set of communications strategies that can be used to redirect people's thinking away from these limiting default patterns of thought and towards a more expansive understanding of the SDGs.
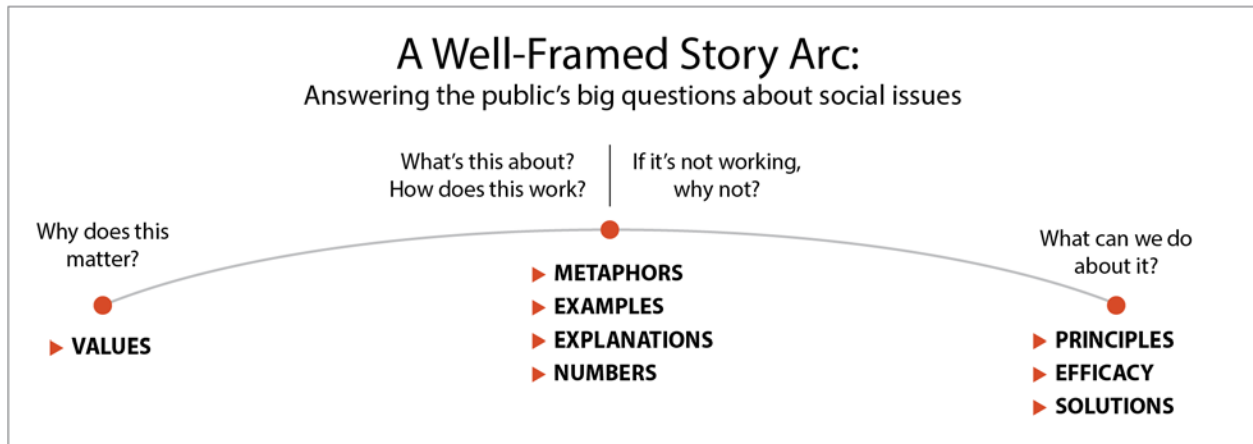
Recommendation 1: Order matters. Override people's default expectations with a well-framed, coherent narrative that channels their thinking.

Reframing an issue involves telling a new story that fills in the public's cognitive holes by answering key questions to enable people to interpret new information productively, improving their capacity to make informed decisions about what policies to support. These key questions include:

- Why does this matter?
- How does it work?
- If it isn't working, why not?
- What can we do about it?

Making sure your communications about the SDGs answer these questions will increase people's understanding of the causes and consequences of, and solutions to, the social problems the SDGs address. A strong "narrative arc" is one way to accomplish this task.

The human brain is wired to think in narrative—we use storytelling all the time to make sense of the world around us. Strategic framing harnesses this feature of cognition by organizing information about an issue into story form, which aids people's interpretation of a message, as well as their ability to remember it and pass it on to others. A well-framed narrative organizes the answers to the primary questions we've identified above in a way that fits people's expectations about what a good story sounds like. An effective arc for a story about social change looks like this:

A Well-Framed Story Arc:
Answering the public's big questions about social issues

What's this about?
How does this work?

If it's not working, why not?

Why does this matter?

What can we do about it?

▶ VALUES

▶ METAPHORS
▶ EXAMPLES
▶ EXPLANATIONS
▶ NUMBERS

▶ PRINCIPLES
▶ EFFICACY
▶ SOLUTIONS

Other frame elements—values, metaphors, examples, explanatory chains, numbers, and solutions—help to answer the questions that, collectively, tell the story about the issue. Values, for example, work well at the beginning of a communication to explain why an issue is a matter of public concern. Explanatory chains, metaphors, and data then fill in the "meat" of the story; once you have established an issue's importance, you can explain the problem in ways that help people engage in the systems-oriented thinking needed to address large-scale social change. When people have the information they need to understand a problem's causes and effects, they are better able to think productively about what solutions are required and to entertain new ideas about how to solve the problem.

The recommendations below offer strategies for answering these key questions effectively.

Recommendation 2: Use tested values to establish what is at stake in meeting the SDGs.

Before members of the public will throw their support behind a policy issue, they first need to understand why that issue matters. By tapping into our society's widely shared beliefs about what is positive, ideal, and desirable, appealing to a value can prime these same beliefs in people who encounter your messages. Testing which values work best to establish the importance of a social issue like childhood development, justice reform, or environmental health is a part of FrameWorks' communications research. Across our work on issues related to community and social well-being, we have found that values emphasizing shared benefits and the common good are best able to boost public support for policy solutions to an issue. *Human Potential* and *Fairness Across Places* are two values that have been shown across issue areas to help the public think about what measures promoting well-being are necessary.

The *Human Potential* value:

Implementing supports for well-being can help ensure that everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential and contribute fully to our communities.

The *Fairness Across Places* value:
No matter where they live, all people should have access to the social and environmental conditions that promote good health and well-being.

Below is a "before and after" example of how the *Human Potential* value might be applied to an advocacy message. The original text is excerpted from a real piece of advocacy communication.

Original text:
The gulf between 'winners' and 'losers' has widened in the current economy—and is projected to continue to grow. Given this reality, the greatest obligation of today's policymakers is to help compensate the losers. The immediate need is to build a stronger system of supports to help those left behind in the changing economic landscape—those who struggle to meet the basic human needs of food, shelter, and health care.

Reframed with *Human Potential*:
Our society is strongest when everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential and contribute to our communities. Food, shelter, health care, and other supports fuel people's potential, yet too many lack access to these basic building-blocks of well-being. The greatest obligation of today's policymakers is to build a strong system of supports that can help people and communities thrive and grow, now and in the future.

The cues in the reframed example avoid the crisis-oriented language in the original text and avoid binaries like "winners and losers," words that may activate people's preconceived biases about different groups. Note, too, that the concept of "human potential" is expressed in a variety of ways—"fuel people's potential," "opportunity . . . to contribute," "help people and communities thrive and grow"—and emphasizes collective, rather than individual, benefits.

The *Fairness Across Places* value:
No matter where they live, all people should have access to the social and environmental conditions that promote good health and well-being.

The "before and after" example below illustrates how *Fairness Across Places* may be applied to an advocacy message.

Original text:

It will take the collaborative work of many—anti-poverty and anti-hunger advocates and organizations, the faith and charitable communities, think tanks, philanthropies, the private sector, individual citizens, and all levels of government—to reach the SDGs. We will need to break down policy silos, let go of ineffective programs, create cross-cutting initiatives, and support higher levels of investment in the development of people and neighborhoods. Collectively, we will need to generate new ideas, new approaches, and new partnerships to build the public support and political will required to eliminate poverty and hunger in the United States by 2030.

Reframed with *Fairness Across Places*:

By working together to send resources where they are most needed, we can help all communities thrive. It will take the collaborative efforts of many—anti-poverty and anti-hunger advocates and organizations, the faith and charitable communities, think tanks, philanthropies, the private sector, individual citizens, and all levels of government—to reach the SDGs. We will need to raze policy silos, end ineffective programs, create cross-cutting initiatives, and support greater investment in people's and neighborhoods' development, so that a bright future does not depend on one's ZIP code. Collectively, we will need to generate new ideas, new approaches, and new partnerships to build the public support and political will required to eliminate poverty and hunger in the United States by 2030.

Appealing to *Fairness Across Places* is especially valuable for steering people away from preexisting perceptions of and biases about individuals and groups. Unlike comparisons between specific places, this value is generic by design, which helps communicators to avoid toggling people's unhelpful preconceptions. The *Fairness Across Places* value can be deployed through phrases like "wherever people live," "no matter their ZIP code," "all of our communities," and "every community."

Bread for the World Institute has already begun to use *Human Potential* and *Fairness Across Places* in its communications. For example, the piece called "Hunger, Health, and the SDGs" uses a *Human Potential* value to introduce the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals: "Together, the 17 goals represent a plan of action for governments and civil society, in partnership, to create a world where everyone can fulfill their potential in a peaceful, healthy environment." Language like this invokes the concept of human potential to explain why the goals matter.

An example of *Fairness Across Places* appears in Bread for the World Institute's communication, *A Transformational Agenda*:

The beauty and the challenge of the goals is the need and opportunity to fundamentally *overhaul how we as a country work together to meet common goals* that support our shared beliefs. Those beliefs embrace the view that *one's zip code should not determine one's destiny* and that each and

every one of us should have the opportunity to develop our talents and pursue our dreams[13] [emphasis added].

By appealing to *Fairness Across Places*, communicators can redirect people's thinking to the qualities of places rather than of people—a move towards system-level thinking. The value's efficacy stems from its ability to build support for the idea that access to needed resources and contexts for success should not be a function of where someone lives. Introducing the idea that locations and structures can be improved opens the door for communicators to talk more about how conditions can be changed, or even which specific locations need more equitable access.

These examples demonstrate the beginning of a strategy for framing with values. We offer the following additional guidance:

- Deepen and broaden the frame effects of these two values by substituting them for other values currently appearing in your messaging. Consistency and repetition are key in strategic framing. By zeroing in on just two values, your messaging will cohere and your audiences will receive repeated exposure to these powerful framing tools.

- Volume matters, too. Every message about the SDGs should appeal to *Human Potential* and/or *Fairness Across Places*. Communications that do not include a values appeal are lost framing opportunities. Though they work especially well at the beginning, weaving values throughout a communication reinforces a productive answer to the question, "Why does this matter?"

Keep in mind that not all values build broader and stronger understandings of social issues, and not all applications of tested values are productive. Communicators should take care to apply these values in ways that are not individualizing; instead, emphasize collective benefits and ideals. *Human Potential* does this when deployed properly, and *Fairness Across Places* is especially effective in explaining how creating the conditions that support well-being benefits entire communities.

Recommendation 3: Build strong explanatory chains to fill in knowledge gaps.

Increasing support for widespread implementation of the SDGs in a domestic context requires first increasing people's understanding of the problems the goals are designed to tackle. A common communications trap is the assumption that the public shares advocates' knowledge about how social problems work and how proposed solutions will improve outcomes. In our review of SDG-related communications, we noted that many of the messages lacked an explicit statement of the problems the SDGs are intended to improve, with the result that the SDGs are presented as a laudable solution to an

invisible problem. To ensure that Bread and its partners effectively build public understanding of the need for the SDGs as an answer to a set of interrelated problems, incorporating more step-by-step explanation of cause and effect is key.

Explanatory chains are a tool that can help accomplish this goal by creating visible connections between the causes and consequences of a problem. A strong explanatory chain has three "links":

- An initiating factor (the cause of a problem)

- Mediating factors (the effects that have been set in motion by the cause)

- Final consequences (the impact of a problem that must be addressed).

These links boost the explanatory power of a message by using a linear "A links to B links to C" logical trajectory to fill in details about an issue that might otherwise be invisible to audiences. Explanatory chains show what affects what and with what consequences for the public. By revealing the mechanisms by which a problem is caused, explanatory chains also prime people to think about what types of solutions are needed.

Explanatory chains are well suited for talking about the interconnectedness of the SDGs and how that interconnectedness can be used to increase impact. The following mock example opens with a quote from the *UN Dispatch* article, "The Sustainable Development Goals Come to the USA," then borrows from other communication materials to model what such a chain might look like in a message about the SDGs:

> In particular, by using the SDGs as a framework for domestic programs, philanthropic organizations can better gear their programs to have more impact. Often times domestic programs are funded and created without taking into consideration their relationship to the bigger picture—how will this program mesh with others?, how can they work together to increase their successes?, are they in harmony?—and this can lead to silos (Initiating Factor). Silos limit organizations' access to the cross-sharing of things like data, information, and innovations that can help all of them improve their results and move the field forward (Mediating Factor). The resulting lack of progress, or the ability to compare and monitor progress, can keep us stuck in a pattern of identifying problems without implementing solutions as effectively as we might otherwise be able to do (Final Consequence). The Millennium Development Goals helped unblock these kinds of bottlenecks by encouraging fields to work collaboratively. The SDGs can mirror that successful collaboration by sharing common measures of progress and standards for

goal-focused work that nonprofits, advocates, and foundations can all use to achieve their aims more quickly.

This explanatory chain helps to build support for the interconnected approach embodied by the SDGs by first presenting silos as a problem. The chain adds information about what problems silos can cause, and what effects these problems might have. The final consequence (e.g., identifying problems without creating solutions) follows logically as a negative result of the cause. By creating a step-by-step logic trail, these links make it easier for a communicator to point to specific remedies that can address the underlying cause of this visible symptom. In this case, the MGDs and SDGs are presented as solutions. Note that the chain concludes with a specific detail about how the SDGs can advance program impact— concrete examples make abstract or complex processes and concepts "easier to think.".

When creating explanatory chains, be sure to demonstrate how the problem is a collective concern and point people towards appropriate solutions.

Recommendation 4: Use the metaphor *Constructing Well-being* to explain how the SDGs address interconnected elements of well-being.

FrameWorks' research on communicating about human services tested strategies for building public understanding of the factors that support well-being. Since many of the SDGs, as well as Bread for the World's own zero-hunger mission, deal with elements of well-being, we believe these research findings will be of use to the SDG advocacy community.

Explanatory metaphors make complex or unfamiliar concepts easier to understand by comparing them to more concrete, familiar objects or processes. They use the power of analogy to enable the public to think more productively about how social policy affects issues like poverty, hunger, child development, education, healthy and safe environments, and well-being more generally.

The *Constructing Well-being* metaphor boosts public support for policies, programs, and funding related to human services. Bread for the World can extend this metaphor to communicate about how international organizations work together to support well-being.

> **The *Constructing Well-being* metaphor concept:**
> Just as building a strong house requires certain materials, building well-being requires community resources, social relationships, and opportunities to thrive. When these materials are not available, people and communities may have shaky foundations that make it difficult to weather life's storms.

Below is an example of how the *Constructing Well-being* metaphor may be applied to a message about the Global Goals. On the left is an excerpt from a real advocacy communication. On the right, the excerpt has been reframed using the metaphor. Note that the content has not changed—just the frame is different.

Original text:	Reframed with *Constructing Well-Being*:
In 2015, the United States and 192 other countries agreed to work toward a set of goals, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), by 2030. The SDGs build on the significant progress made during the 2000-2015 Millennium Development Goals effort. The SDGs apply to all countries and include ending hunger and extreme poverty. The SDGs are an opportunity for advocates and organizations to work together to achieve maximum impact. Many are already engaged. For example, leaders of all major U.S. faith traditions, as well as five U.S. cities and one state (California), have committed to the SDGs. Several years after the official end of the Great Recession, the economy is improving and the unemployment rate is dropping. Yet poverty and hunger rates are not falling. In 2014, more than 46 million Americans, nearly 15 percent of the population, lived in poverty. Poverty robs a child of opportunities right from the beginning. Childhood hunger, especially before age 2, can prevent children from growing properly. It can rewire the brain, affecting behavioral, educational, economic, and health outcomes for decades. The financial costs stemming from childhood poverty are staggering, with one study calculating a total cost of half a trillion dollars every year. Economic inequality is a major barrier to ending hunger and poverty. The richest 10 percent of Americans average nearly nine times as much income as the bottom 90 percent. Such significant inequality can stifle economic growth, increase political inequality, and erode trust and community life.	In 2015, the United States and 192 other countries agreed to work toward a set of goals, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), by 2030. The SDGs build on the significant progress made during the 2000-2015 Millennium Development Goals effort. The SDGs function as a blueprint for a fifteen-year "construction project" designed to make the structure of our society stronger by recognizing the role of human well-being in a healthy and prosperous society. The SDGs apply to all countries and include ending hunger and extreme poverty. The SDGs are an opportunity for advocates and organizations to work together on this project to achieve maximum impact. For example, leaders of all major U.S. faith traditions, as well as five US cities and one state (California), have committed to implementing the SDGs. Several years after the official end of the Great Recession, the economy is improving and the unemployment rate is dropping. Yet poverty and hunger rates are not falling. The data demonstrate that our current structures need repair. For example, in 2014, more than 46 million Americans, nearly 15 percent of the population, lived in poverty. Poverty separates children and families from the foundations of well-being, like a quality education, nutrition, safety, and good jobs. Hunger can weaken children's brain development, affecting behavioral, educational, economic, and health outcomes for decades. Such shaky foundations travel up our social structure, making it difficult to build sturdy, durable communities. The costs of repairing problems caused

	by poverty and hunger are substantial—by some estimates, a total cost of half a trillion dollars in largely preventable repairs that come too late in the construction project to be effective.

The *Constructing Well-being* metaphor can be used to move Americans beyond their dominant perceptions that aid agencies provide only (and should only provide) temporary supports that address basic needs, a limited understanding that obscures the purpose and results of these agencies' efforts to create a foundation for community- and population-level success. The metaphor helps people to think differently about well-being in three key ways, by:

- making it easier to think about how well-being, like a house, is constructed through the collaborative effort of many stakeholders, including experts, advocates, and community members. This helps to expand the public's attribution of responsibility for solving social problems.

- steering people away from individual-focused solutions: after all, houses don't build themselves.

- illustrating how investing in people's sturdy well-being now enables them to weather storms that may come in the future, which demonstrates the importance of preventive or mitigating work.

Recommendation 5: Frame data with social math.

Advocates frequently turn to numbers to make their case on an issue, but contrary to popular belief, numbers don't speak for themselves: without careful framing, data can easily be misinterpreted. Social math is a framing technique that makes unfamiliar data easier to understand by comparing it to more familiar domains and more relatable scales. We recommend social math as a strategy for using data more effectively to build understanding of how social problems work. By making data more comprehensible and "easier to think," Bread for the World can also use social math to keep at bay the American public's fatalistic belief that entrenched social issues are too large to solve.

Social math works by:

- Comparing the size of two things to help the public better appreciate the size and scope of an unfamiliar concept or issue

- Creating a relationship between unfamiliar and familiar concepts to leverage the public's existing understanding

- Making appropriate solutions visible by explaining the data in a way that helps non-experts think about the scale of the work that's needed.

Consider this data point:

> *More than 14 percent of households, or more than 48 million people, were food-insecure at some time during 2014. One in seven of us did not always have enough money to put food on the table.*[14]

While this example presents data about the scale of food insecurity in three ways—as a percentage of households, as an estimated figure, and as a ratio—these numbers are not necessarily clear to the general public: Is 14 percent a lot? How many is 48 million? Social math can help make these numbers more tangible and concrete by giving them context. For example, you might compare these numbers to population data to make them easier to imagine:

> *More than 48 million people were food-insecure at some point in 2014. This is more than four times the population of the state of Ohio.*

Tethering the data point to solid, "thinkable" quantities—"Ohio is a pretty big state, so four times that population means this is a big number of affected people!"—makes this number more meaningful for non-experts. It also makes it more memorable.

Social math can be used in concert with other framing strategies. For instance, the same data point about food insecurity can be incorporated into an explanatory chain that connects aspects of the SDGs to one another, as this example shows:

> *More than 48 million people were food-insecure at some point in 2014. This is more than four times the population of the state of Ohio.* When more than four times the population of an entire state cannot get access to adequate nutrition, a pillar of well-being, our ability to reach our full potential as a society is diminished. Without adequate infrastructure, such as distribution channels that reach every community, food and other important resources that support well-being cannot reach everyone who needs them (Cause, or Initiating Factor). Nutrition is one of the building blocks of children's development, and when children have access to healthy food throughout the year, they have one of the raw materials necessary to build strong brains and bodies (Mediating Factor). Chronic food insecurity for children has lasting effects on their health and outcomes as adults (Final Consequence). We can achieve our goal of ending the developmental impacts of food insecurity, like stunting, by supporting rural infrastructure projects that will allow food to reach all communities (Solution).

In this example, the data supports the story by establishing the size and urgency of the problem before the explanatory chain lays out, step by step, why this issue matters and what can be done to address it.

Framing tip: Data should never be your message. If you find your numbers playing more than a supporting role in your story, you probably need to rethink your story.

Summary of a Well-Framed Approach

An important tenet of strategic framing is to leave nothing to chance. When communicating with non-experts about the SDGs, it is critical to fill in all of the important parts of a story to prevent your audience from filling in any gaps in understanding with their own preexisting default patterns of thinking.

Instead of:	Try:
Focusing on the outcomes for vulnerable populations	Pointing to collective benefits and shared responsibility: Appeal to *Human Potential*
Assuming too much about non-experts' understanding of the issues	Explanatory chains that fill in people's cognitive holes, step by step
Focusing on problems	Matching scope of problems to scale of solutions
Abstract solutions	Explanation of how solutions can be implemented and how they improve outcomes
Presenting comparisons between countries	Appealing to *Fairness Across Places*
Unframed data	Social math
Listing needed changes	"How it works" stories that show how supports and interventions translate to change

Moving Forward

The recommendations we have presented in this brief are based on FrameWorks' existing research about social change communications in the United States. We have curated these strategies for expanding public thinking about social issues to provide guidance on how Bread for the World can incorporate evidence-based framing strategies into its communications about both the Sustainable Development Goals and, more specifically, its work to end hunger. There are, however, communications challenges facing Bread for the World that FrameWorks' existing research cannot speak to without further investigation. Below we list these challenges.

- **How does the public think about international issues?** The key to understanding how the American public understands international issues is to identify and analyze the cultural models people use to reason about the United Nations, international agreements, the SDGs themselves, or multinational efforts to address global problems more generally. Mapping the cultural models that influence public discourse on these issues will allow communicators to refine their framing strategies even further to ensure they are effective in building support for the SDGs not only as they affect American social problems but also as they relate to efforts in other countries.

- **Does the value of *Interdependence* work?** A number of the communication samples we reviewed in this analysis use *interdependence* as a value. FrameWorks has tested this value's effects on communications about a variety of domestic issues, including child development and mental health supports, socioeconomic mixing, and addiction policy. Predictably, this value yields different results for different issues. When it does work, it steers people away from zero-sum thinking and helps people to view different communities as mutually reliant. But we have seen it backfire.

- **Who are effective messengers?** An effective messenger is one whose perspective and identity are seen as objective, trustworthy, and reliable. Bread for the World's 2017 "Offering of Letters," for example, names leaders such as Pope Francis, Bill Gates, and organizations like the World Bank as dedicated supporters of anti-hunger efforts[15]. The efficacy of these messengers and others can be qualitatively and quantitatively tested for their ability to increase people's understanding of complex problems and processes and to build support for policies.

As advocates continue to work on the challenge of communicating about the Sustainable Development Goals, it's important to learn what distinguishes effective from ineffective outreach on this topic. There is

solid evidence that some ways of framing the issue are likely to decrease public engagement and support—for instance, emphasizing how poorly the US rates on a number of the goals when compared to other countries. Instead of merely building a sense of urgency, effective framing builds a sense of collective agency. Familiar metaphors and values bring people into the conversation and "re-mind" them of what is important to consider as they weigh public options. Strategic framing fosters people's ability to have robust conversations about the Global Goals as a public issue and to consider the effects and possibilities of the policies, structures, and systems that we have created and that we can change.

Endnotes

[1] Habitat for Humanity. Untitled. Public statement on the SDGs.

[2] Centre for International Policy Studies. "Towards 2030: Building Canada's Engagement with Global Sustainable Development."

[3] See, for example, FrameWorks Institute. "Can Redirecting Values Influence Support for Addiction Policies and Related Issues?"

[4] See, for example, FrameWorks Institute. "Refining the Options for Advancing Support for Child Mental Health Policies" and "Mixing It Up: Reframing Neighborhood Socioeconomic Diversity."

[5] Bread for the World. "The Sustainable Development Goals in the United States."

[6] See, for example, FrameWorks Institute. "The Power of Explanation: Reframing STEM and Informal Learning" and "Framing and Facts: Necessary Synergies in Communicating about Community Safety and Criminal Justice."

[7] Bread for the World. "Hunger, Health, and the SDGs."

[8] Bread for the World. "Conclusion: Ending Hunger by 2030."

[9] See, for example, FrameWorks Institute. "Talking Human Services: A FrameWorks MessageMemo."

[10] Bread for the World. "Conclusion: Ending Hunger by 2030."

[11] Bread for the World. "Kicking Off the Sustainable Development Goals in the United States."

[12] Save the Children. "New Global Goals Could Save 6,500 Children Every Day and Held End Health and Education Inequalities."

[13] Bread for the World. "Conclusion: Ending Hunger by 2030."

[14] Bread for the World. "Kicking Off the Sustainable Development Goals in the United States."

[15] Bread for the World. "2017 Offering of Letters: Doing Our Part to End Hunger."

Appendix A

The following organizations were included in the SDG communications analysis conducted by the FrameWorks Institute:

Action Against Hunger

Bread for the World Institute

Canadian Council for International Cooperation

Centre for International Policy Studies

Council on Foundations and Foundation Center (joint statement)

Habitat for Humanity

House of Commons International Development Committee

International Institute for Sustainable Development

International Women's Health Coalition

Norman Paterson School of International Affairs

Policy Options

President's Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships

Save the Children

SDG Funders

UN Dispatch

United Nations Foundation

Urban Institute

Appendix B

To build the capacity of the nonprofit sector to communicate more effectively about social issues, the FrameWorks Institute has developed an approach called Strategic Frame Analysis® (SFA), which comprises a set of multidisciplinary, multi-method, iterative processes that emphasize the empirical testing of potential frame effects. SFA employs a range of data collection and analysis tools, including expert, on-the-street, and cultural models interviews, survey instruments, transcription coding, statistical analysis, peer discourse sessions, media content analyses, literature reviews, and usability trials. The findings from this research process describe and explain how communications in general, and media in particular, influence public support for social programs and policies. With this information in hand, FrameWorks then develops and tests framing strategies that work to affect the public's policy preferences.

The SFA process of reframing a social issue begins with expert interviews and literature reviews, which FrameWorks researchers use to distill the "untranslated story" of an issue: the central problems associated with the issue, the evidence or science base that supports these conclusions, and the policy and program solutions that expert knowledge and understanding suggest will help to resolve the issue. From there, FrameWorks researchers turn their attention to the media and the public, combining techniques from cultural anthropology and cognitive linguistics to look for patterns in media stories about the issue and to conduct semi-structured one-on-one and group (peer discourse) interviews with the general public in order to identify the cultural models—implicit shared understandings and assumptions—that guide people's thinking about abstract social issues. FrameWorks researchers then juxtapose these two sets of data—expert and public thinking—to "map" or situate the ways that experts and advocates explain social issues against the dominant cultural models that the public brings to bear on the same issue. The incongruities that arise between these two data sets become primary targets for prescriptive research.

FrameWorks' prescriptive research uses a variety of social-science research methods, including large-scale experimental surveys of nationally representative samples, to test the efficacy of particular frames, such as specific values appeals and explanatory metaphors. In these experimental surveys, randomly assigned treatment groups are exposed to framed messages, then asked a series of questions to address their support for a range of related policy measures. Their responses are measured against those of a control group to ascertain any effects that emerge as a result of the framing strategies used. To develop explanatory metaphors, FrameWorks data collection and analysis methods also include on-the-street testing, persistence trials to assess a metaphor's capacity to spread through a population, and usability trials to ensure experts and advocates in the field are able to maintain the integrity of their message when using the metaphor in their communications. For more information about our research methods and about specific research findings, visit FrameWorks online at www.frameworksinstitute.org.