

Communicating Information to Build Trust in Giga-Projects

Lessons from Red Sea Global



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About Red Sea Global



OWNERSHIP

Wholly owned by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF).

MANDATE

Aligned with Vision 2030 target: tourism = 10% of Saudi GDP by 2030.

SCOPE

Develops resorts, infrastructure, communities, and workforce training.

PORTFOLIO

Three west-coast destinations: The Red Sea (28,000 km²), AMAALA (4,200 km²), and Thuwal Private Retreat.

Continuity Is the Foundation for Trust

At Red Sea Global, the same social team authors the ESIA, the CESMP, and the OESMP. Familiar faces carry across phases, baseline knowledge does not reset, and commitments survive transitions that ordinarily lose them — the structural precondition for the communication discipline this paper sets out.



Authored by the same social team across all three phases — same faces, same accountability, same memory.

- **Relationships carry forward.** Stakeholder concerns, baseline data, and community contacts built during the ESIA continue into construction and operations without loss.
- **Accountability stays attached to people.** The team that writes the commitments designs the mitigation measures and monitors compliance — the same names answer the same questions on the ground.
- **Familiar faces reduce consultation fatigue.** Communities see continuity across phases; credibility compounds rather than resetting at each handover.
- **Lessons translate without a handover discount.** What construction surfaces flows into operations directly, without the knowledge loss handovers ordinarily produce.

Continuity creates the space in which trust can build. The discipline of communication is what fills that space — which is where this paper picks up.

The Information Vacuum Is Never Empty

Public trust is determined less by what the project decides than by who fills the information environment around those decisions. Silence becomes speculation; corrections, when they come, arrive too late to set the terms.

01

Silence is rarely empty

When the project does not speak quickly and credibly, speculation, rumour, and misinformation occupy the space. The project's narrative arrives, if at all, as a correction rather than a primary message.

02

Communication design is addressable

Trust has many determinants — many of them external to the project. Communication discipline is the one most under the project's control, and the one that responds to deliberate methodological attention.

03

A discipline in four moves

Occupy the information environment proactively. Calibrate communication to audience and language. Build channels that flow both ways. Make outcomes visible.

What this paper offers: **6 principles** · **3 operational instruments** (SEBS, Jewar, EGM) · **4 trust indicators** · **5 lessons**.

Four Forces That Fill the Vacuum

Four structural conditions amplify the importance of communication in giga-projects beyond ordinary infrastructure delivery.

01 Compressed pace

Giga-project decisions outstrip the pace at which communities absorb information through informal channels. Compression is experienced as opacity even when intentions are sound.

02 Multiple constituencies

Scale produces distinct audiences — direct neighbours, sectoral interest groups, youth, women, religious authorities, regional and national government — each with different informational expectations.

03 Adversarial information environment

A misleading claim propagates in hours; a corrective fact in weeks. A communication architecture that does not occupy the environment proactively finds it occupied on terms it does not set.

04 Inherited skepticism

Communities arrive with accumulated experience of previous developments. Communication that ignores this history compounds existing distrust rather than building new trust.

Six Principles of Trust-Related Communication

None of them is novel in isolation. The discipline lies in applying them together, over time.

01

Timeliness over completeness

Honest provisional updates beat polished delayed ones. Silence is read as concealment.

02

Accuracy over reassurance

State limits, uncertainties, and unresolved issues plainly. Omissions become visible.

03

Two-way design

Channels permit information to flow in both directions; community inputs visibly change outcomes.

04

Cultural & linguistic calibration

Arabic delivery; gendered protocols; local venues; clear, non-technical wording. Integrity, not style.

05

Proportionate engagement

Communication intensity calibrated by community tier. Higher exposure receives more direct engagement.

06

Community-led validation

Local community experience and test destinations before public opening their lived feedback shapes the offering and earns trust no campaign can manufacture.

How Trust Is Monitored — Four Indicators

Trust is treated as an observable outcome rather than an inferential abstraction. No indicator is sufficient on its own; in combination they make trust manageable.

ENGAGEMENT PARTICIPATION

What it measures

Attendance at outreach events, FGD acceptance rates, survey response rates.

Signal

Sustained declines often indicate emerging disengagement before grievance volumes rise.

GRIEVANCE PATTERN DATA

What it measures

Recurrence rates, escalation rates, and the proportion of grievances closed with the complainant satisfied.

Signal

Rising recurrence suggests the system is closing tickets without addressing root causes.

PERCEPTION SURVEY RESULTS

What it measures

Periodic perception surveys across relevant community tiers, tracking trust-related items directly.

Signal

Value depends on consistent question design over time so that movement is comparable rather than artifactual.

QUALITATIVE SIGNALS FROM FGDS

What it measures

Trust-related themes emerging in qualitative coding; the language communities use to describe the project.

Signal

Diagnostic indicators that quantitative measures alone cannot capture.

The SEBS as a Communication-Design Tool

The Socio-Economic Baseline Study is used not only as a regulatory baseline but as a primary diagnostic tool for engagement planning.

SEBS demographic indicator	What it reveals about communication needs	Communication response
Education & literacy	Capacity to absorb written and technical material.	Pivot from text-heavy reports to visual summaries, infographics, and oral communication in plain language.
Gender norms & family structure	Whether mixed-gender engagement will surface a representative range of views.	Parallel gender-specific sessions; female facilitators for women's groups; respect for family decision-making patterns.
Age distribution	Which channels reach which generational cohorts.	Digital platforms for youth; in-person majlis and elder-led settings for senior community members.
Livelihoods & economy	How project information should be contextualised.	Translate environmental and logistical impacts into practical terms relevant to local livelihoods.

Stakeholder Field Engagement

Inviting stakeholders to experience our sites firsthand — nurseries, islands, and local destinations



Fishermen/boat owners — Islands & Sea



Students — Operators Visits



Farmers — Nursery Tours



Community — Local Events

Knowledge Sharing & Awareness Building

Presenting findings, building community awareness, and sharing results from conservation studies



Presenting Study Findings



Community Awareness Sessions



Stakeholder Workshops

The Jewar Platform — Two-Way Design at Scale

A digital bridge that supplements rather than replaces face-to-face engagement, extending the cadence of two-way communication.

Proactive dissemination

Project updates, upcoming construction activities, and the availability of social programmes are communicated directly from the source, reducing the latency between event and information.

Accessible intake

A formal, low-friction channel through which community members can raise issues, file grievances, or submit requests directly to the social team — extending the External Grievance Mechanism.

Responsive tracking

Concerns are tracked, managed, and responded to in a timely, transparent manner. Each interaction generates a visible record of accountability.

JEWAR IS A COMPLEMENT, NOT A SUBSTITUTE

Face-to-face engagement remains the primary channel through which trust is built and maintained in Saudi giga-project communities. The Jewar platform extends the reach and continuity of that engagement — particularly for younger community members — while elder and traditional segments continue to be engaged through in-person outreach, and other channels appropriate to age and preference.

The EGM as a Tiered Learning Loop

Grievances are confidential at the individual level — they are never publicly disclosed to communities. The lessons they surface, however, must travel for the system to improve. Anonymized insights flow inward to RSG, across to the operators we own, and outward to authorities and peers — closing the loop without exposing the source.

TIER 1 · INWARD

RSG social, Project & Corporate

What flows: full case data — issue, response, root cause.

Where it goes: up through the CPCD Project and Corporate altitudes.

What changes: CESMP / OESMP procedures, policy, training.

TIER 2 · ACROSS

RSG-owned operators & subsidiaries

What flows: aggregated patterns — issue types, recurrence, what worked. No identifiable details.

Where it goes: across the CPCD Destination altitude — subsidiary hotels, retail tenants, contractors.

What changes: operator orientation, contractual review, repeat-issue prevention.

TIER 3 · OUTWARD

Local authorities & peers

What flows: aggregated lessons — what was learned, what to watch for. No identifiable details.

Where it goes: government partners, sector peers, the IAIA community.

What changes: avoids repetition of errors across the wider ecosystem.

INTERNAL HEALTH METRICS Acknowledgment **24–48 hrs** · Resolution **within SLA** · Recurrence **decreasing** · Overdue **< 5%**
Tracked continuously and reviewed in the CPCD Project altitude. Not publicly disclosed to local communities.

Aligns with the CPCD cascade (Alyousef): the EGM is the upward feedback that closes the loop between operator-level practice and corporate-level accountability.

Sources: RSG External Grievance Mechanism (2024); Moffat & Zhang (2014); Boutilier & Thomson (2011); Companion paper — Alyousef (CPCD).

Three Short Worked Examples from Practice

Principles are easier to evaluate when illustrated with concrete operational practice.

Example 1 Calibrated engagement

FINDING

Quantitative surveys identified strong craft skills and low income; the combination was read as a skills problem.

FGD WITH CALIBRATION

Female facilitators, local Arabic, culturally appropriate venues. Participants explained the binding constraint was market access, not skills.

RESPONSE

Digital market linkage tools and integration with destination retail operators.

Example 2 Tiered sharing of grievance insights

WHAT IS SHARED

Aggregated patterns — issue types, recurrence, what worked. Shared with our owned operators, local authorities, and peers. Complainant identities never travel.

WHY IT MATTERS

Lessons stop being local. Operators learn from each other and authorities surface system patterns — without exposing the communities who raised the issues.

Example 3 Cadence beyond personnel

THE PATTERN

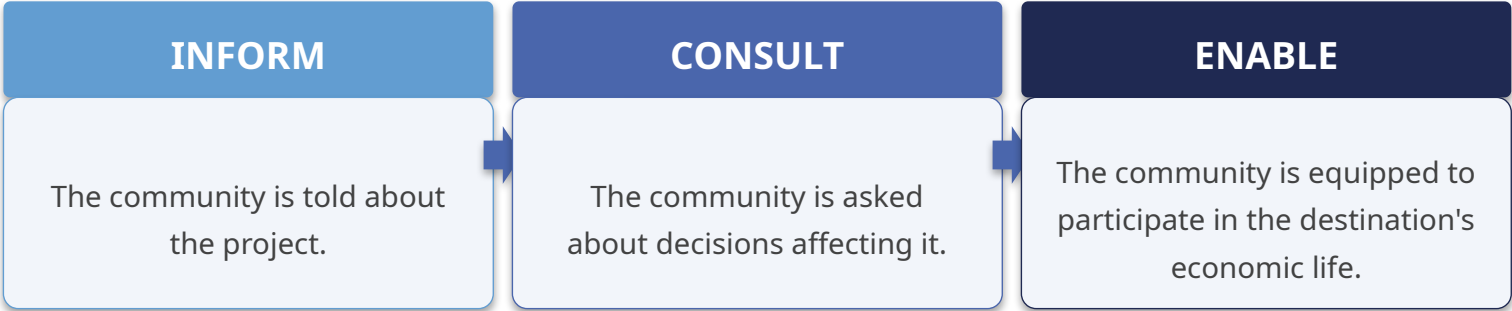
Trust often depends on specific individuals. When personnel rotate, accumulated trust does not transfer automatically.

THE RESPONSE

Outreach roadmaps and stakeholder engagement plans set fixed cadences met regardless of who is meeting them. Briefing handovers between rotating personnel are treated as a continuity discipline.

From Communication to Empowerment

Trust deepens when communication design and operational practice point in the same direction — informing → consulting → enabling.



English for Tourism	Jewar Collective	Volunteering Program	Local Influencers
Industry-specific English training that opens hospitality roles to local residents.	Local artisans and producers plugged into the destination's supply chain for authentic guest experiences.	Residents in guest-facing roles — building skills and turning citizens into the destination's most credible ambassadors.	Trusted local voices brought into the story — peer-to-peer credibility that no official channel can replicate.

Challenges / Limitations & Solutions

Pairing each limitation with the corresponding lesson learned from practice.

Challenge / Limitation	Solution / Lesson Learned
Scope vs. community needs Our mandate covers a defined area and set of targets — but communities surface needs that fall outside it.	Advocate and integrate ➡ Carry unmet needs to the right stakeholders, and fold what we can into the project where it strengthens outcomes.
Trust is slow to earn, fast to lose Years of consistent engagement can be undone by one missed commitment or one poorly handled exchange.	Protect every interaction ➡ Treat every commitment as binding and every touchpoint as material — close the loop, even on small asks.
Communities are not monolithic Within one community, livelihoods, ages and interests differ — one message rarely lands the same way for everyone.	Segment and tailor ➡ Map the sub-groups and adapt channel, language and framing — same intent, different delivery for each audience.

Three Segments of a Comprehensive Approach

This paper is one segment — the Goal layer — of a wider research agenda where each piece only works when joined with the other two.



Paper 1991 · Maram Almansour (this paper) <i>Public Trust & Social Impact Assessment</i> Frames public trust as the goal of social engagement — earned through how participation is designed: whose voice is heard, in what setting, and through what local norms.	Paper 1567 · Majed Shaabein <i>Strengthening SIA against urgency & misinformation</i> Adapts surveys and FGDs to Saudi context — gender-segregated discussions, tribal hierarchies, language and religious sensitivities — and analyses the data into evidence.	Companion paper · Faisal Alyousef <i>IA follow-up, ongoing communication, sound information</i> Receives evidence and distributes it across the four altitudes of the CPCD model — sustained through contractual mechanisms over the destination's multi-decade life.
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Let's continue the conversation!

Message me your questions or comments in the IAIA26 app.

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Companion paper: Shaabein (1567) — How FGDs Are Shaping Saudi's Giga-Project CDPs

Companion paper: Alyousef — Beyond the Developer: Cascading Public-Participation Obligations