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# Agenda Building in Corporate Communication Strategy for Responding to Nickel Downstreaming Issues in the Media: A Case Study of PT Indonesia Weda Bay Industrial Park

**Aisyah Aqila Rahma Khoirunnisa[1], Nanda Lutfiah Pramono[2], La Mani[3], Muhamad Aras[4]**
[1,2,3,4]Communication Department, BINUS Graduate Program, Master of Strategic Marketing Communication, Bina Nusantara University, Jakarta, Indonesia

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**ABSTRACT**

Nickel downstreaming has become a public agenda that brings together industrial development narratives with environmental concerns, public health, governance, employment, occupational safety, and social impacts. This study analyzes the agenda-building process within the corporate communication strategy of PT Indonesia Weda Bay Industrial Park (IWIP) when responding to nickel downstreaming issues in the media. The study employs a descriptive qualitative approach and a case study method. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with four IWIP communication practitioners; content analysis of JATAM and Mongabay as the context for external issue agendas; 13 IWIP owned-media posts; 152 media placement publications; and corporate communication documents from January to July 2025. The findings show that IWIP's agenda-building process consists of six interconnected stages: monitoring external issue agendas, mapping issue substance and escalation, selecting the response agenda, coordinating cross-functionally and validating data, constructing corporate issue attributes and messages, and distributing them through owned media and media placement. The company does not respond directly to every issue but selects issues based on relevance, impact, organizational authority, data readiness, and communication risk. Owned media sustains the corporate agenda through representations of activities and programs, while media placement broadens reach and situates issues within the contexts of downstreaming, occupational safety, employment, sustainability, and development. The findings indicate that corporate responses to media issues are not merely message-delivery activities, but a selective, data-based, non-confrontational, and long-term corporate agenda-building process.

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***Corresponding Author:***

Aisyah Aqila Rahma Khoirunnisa
Master of Strategic Marketing Communication, Bina Nusantara University, Jakarta, Indonesia
Email: aisyah.khoirunnisa@binus.ac.id

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia holds a strategic position in the global nickel supply chain. Downstreaming policy aims to increase the added value of minerals through domestic processing, strengthen national industry, attract investment, and create employment opportunities [1]–[3]. One implementation of this policy is developing integrated nickel industrial zones that bring together mineral processing activities, infrastructure development, labor absorption, and downstream industry development.

However, nickel downstreaming is not solely an economic development agenda. In the media sphere, this issue is also linked to the environment, public health, industrial governance, occupational safety, employment, and social change around industrial zones. Digital media has expanded the number of actors who can produce and distribute information. JATAM and Mongabay, for example, consistently bring environmental, health, coastal-community, and governance issues into the public sphere. At the same time, the company also produces communication through owned media and media placement to explain its activities, programs, and organizational position.

This condition shows that the dynamics of nickel downstreaming are determined not only by the content of a single news report, but also by competition among the salience levels of different issues. The agenda-setting perspective helps explain how certain issues and attributes gain greater emphasis in media communication [4], [5]. However, agenda setting mainly explains issue salience, whereas the process by which an organization selects, constructs, and pushes its agenda into the media space requires an agenda-building perspective.

Agenda building positions the media agenda as the outcome of interaction among various sources, organizations, public relations practitioners, media routines, and social actors seeking to bring certain issues and attributes to media attention. In a corporate context, agenda building can be observed in the internal process through which an organization monitors the issue environment, selects topics to prioritize, provides verified information, constructs messages, and builds media access through publication and media relations [6]–[8]. This perspective better suits reading corporate strategy because the research focuses not only on the content of communication, but on the organizational process that produces the communication agenda.

Previous research on nickel downstreaming has focused more on policy, economics, environment, and social impact. In the communication field, studies often focus separately on media agenda, media relations, digital communication, or reputation. Studies explaining how the external issue agenda translates into a corporate communication agenda through mechanisms such as monitoring, response selection, cross-functional coordination, data validation, issue-attribute construction, and channel selection remain limited. This gap matters because companies do not always respond to a news report through direct clarification. Responses may take the form of selecting an agenda to be included in owned media, reinforcing certain topics through media placement, or deciding not to expand an issue that does not yet require a public response.

Based on this background, this study addresses the question: how does the agenda-building process work within the corporate communication strategy of PT Indonesia Weda Bay Industrial Park in responding to nickel downstreaming issues developing in the media? The study aims to analyze the relationship between the external issue agenda, the internal agenda-selection process, data-based message construction, and the use of corporate communication channels. The research focuses on IWIP's strategy, while JATAM and Mongabay content describes the external issue agenda that shapes the context of the company's monitoring.

### 1.1 Agenda Setting: Issue and Attribute Salience

Agenda-setting theory explains that media play a role in determining which issues are considered important through frequency, placement, repetition, and emphasis. McCombs and Shaw [4] showed that media attention to an issue relates to the level of importance the public attaches to it. As the theory developed, agenda setting has been differentiated into first-level and second-level agenda setting. The first level focuses on the salience of objects or issues, while the second level focuses on the salience of attributes attached to those objects [5].

In this study, agenda setting is used to map two things. First, which issues consistently appear across external actors' channels and IWIP's communication. Second, which attributes are emphasized when the nickel downstreaming issue is discussed. The research data show that JATAM and Mongabay more frequently raise environmental issues, public health, socio-ecological impacts, coastal communities, and governance. In contrast, IWIP's communication emphasizes environmental management, occupational health and safety (K3), social programs, employment, human resource development, sustainability, and development contributions.

This study limits agenda-setting to analyzing the media agenda and the organization's communication agenda. This study does not measure the public agenda or changes in audience attitudes. Therefore, the analytical results are not used to conclude that the company's issue emphasis has changed public perception, but rather to show the empirically observed priorities of issues and attributes for each actor.

### 1.2 Agenda Building in Corporate Communication

Agenda building explains the process preceding the formation of the media agenda—how issues are carried, negotiated, and developed by various interested actors. Lang and Lang [6] emphasized that agendas do not emerge automatically from events but are built through issue definition, media attention, actor activity, and event development. In public relations studies, agenda building is then used to read organizational efforts to provide information materials and push particular issues to gain a place on the media agenda.

Turk [7] used the concept of information subsidies to explain the information organizations provide to media in formats that ease the news-production process, such as press releases, data, interviews, and supporting materials. Kiousis et al. [8] later linked first- and second-level agenda building to public relations efforts, highlighting how

organizations and specific attributes are emphasized in communication materials. Thus, agenda building relates not only to how often an organization communicates, but also to decisions regarding issues, attributes, data, sources, and channels used.

In this study, agenda building is operationalized as a process comprising: (1) monitoring the external issue agenda; (2) mapping substance, sources, and escalation; (3) selecting issues that enter the company's response agenda; (4) coordination and data validation; (5) constructing attributes and messages; and (6) distribution through owned media and media placement. This operationalization is not intended to test the causal influence of company materials on the media agenda, but rather to explain how the corporate communication agenda is built based on case data.

### 1.3 Corporate Communication and Public Relations Strategy

Corporate communication integrates internal and external communication to maintain consistent identity, messaging, stakeholder relationships, and organizational reputation [9]. In the nickel downstreaming issue, the communication function cannot work alone because the data required relates to the environment, occupational safety, employment, social matters, regulation, and operations. Corporate messages are therefore formed through coordination among the communication function, external relations, CSR, technical functions, legal, and management.

Public relations strategy begins with situational and objective analysis before an organization determines its publics, messages, channels, and forms of communication [10]. In this study, strategy is understood as a series of decisions linking issue interpretation with the construction of a communication agenda. The decision to respond, delay, monitor, or not expand an issue is part of the strategy, not merely an indicator of communication activity level.

Owned media and media placement serve different functions in this process. Owned media provides greater control over information sequencing, visuals, and publication continuity. Media placement provides broader reach and allows the company's issues to be positioned within the context of industry, development, employment, or sustainability. This difference in channel function matters for agenda building because the agenda is shaped not only by issue selection but also by how the issue is distributed.

Table 1. Position of concepts within the research analysis

| Concept | Focus of analysis | Applications to data |
|---|---|---|
| First-level agenda setting | What issues are prioritized | Mapping dominant topics on JATAM, Mongabay, owned media IWIP, and media placement |
| Second-level agenda setting | What attributes are attached to the issue | Mapping the attributes of environment, health, governance, K3, labor, sustainability, and development contributions |
| Agenda building | How an organization's communication agenda is shaped and pushed into the media space | Analyze monitoring, issue selection, coordination, validation, message preparation, and the use of owned media and media placement |
| Corporate communication | Integration of functions and consistency of communication | Analyze the role of cross-functional collaboration in producing accurate and publishable information |

## 2. METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a single case study method. The case study method was chosen because the research focuses on an agenda-building process bound to the organizational context, authority structure, issue character, and communication practices of PT Indonesia Weda Bay Industrial Park [11], [12]. The unit of analysis is the corporate communication process in responding to the nickel downstreaming issue agenda, from interpreting the issue to distributing the company's agenda through communication channels.

Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with four informants purposively selected for their direct involvement in issue management and corporate communication. The informants comprised the General Manager of External Relations (YS), Media Relations Corporate Communication (MA), Communication & CSR (MF), and Creative Content Strategist (AN). These four positions represent strategic perspectives, media relations, socio-environmental data validation, and content production/storytelling.

Secondary data included JATAM and Mongabay content from January to July 2025 as the context of the external issue agenda, 13 official IWIP Instagram posts from January to July 2025, 152 media placement publications from February to July 2025, and corporate communication documents. The recording unit for owned media was a single post, while the recording unit for media placement was a single publication in a single outlet. Frequency data were used to descriptively map thematic salience, not to measure communication effectiveness or influence on the public.

Table 2. Data sources and their analytical function

| Data source | Scope | Function in analysis |
|---|---|---|
| In-depth interviews | 4 informants: YS, MA, MF, and AN | Reconstruct the monitoring process, agenda selection, coordination, validation, message preparation, and channel selection |
| JATAM and Mongabay Content | January–July 2025 | Mapping the agenda of external issues in the context of company monitoring |
| Owned media IWIP | 13 Instagram content, January–July 2025 | Map prioritized topics and attributes through company channels |
| Media placement | 152 publications, February–July 2025 | Mapping themes that are extended to external media through corporate communication initiatives |
| Supporting documents | Corporate communication materials and documents | Checking for consistency between the interview and the implementation of the communication |

Data analysis adapted the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña [13], which includes data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The first stage involved transcribing interviews and grouping documents. The second stage involved initial coding using categories such as external issue agenda, monitoring, escalation, response selection, coordination, validation, message attributes, channels, and communication continuity. The third stage was mapping first-level and second-level agenda setting in the content. The fourth stage involved pattern matching to construct the

agenda-building sequence based on consistency across interviews, owned media, media placement, and documents [16].

Source and method triangulation strengthened data validity. The study compared informants' statements with the distribution of owned-media content, media placement themes, and communication documents. The analysis also clearly distinguished between agenda-building practices and their effects. The study concludes that it examines only observable processes and communication outputs, not changes in the public agenda or the success of persuasion [17].

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings show that IWIP's communication strategy can be read as a corporate agenda-building process. Issue agendas that develop outside the company do not automatically translate into a public response. The company first monitors, maps, and selects issues. After an issue enters the response agenda, the company coordinates and validates it before determining message attributes and distribution channels. This process explains the relationship between agenda setting in the media space and agenda building within the organization.

### 3.1 The External Issue Agenda as a Strategic Input

Analysis of JATAM and Mongabay shows that the nickel downstreaming issue is presented through an agenda emphasizing socio-ecological impacts, public health, coastal communities, environmental quality, captive coal-fired power plants, governance, and state–industry relations. At the first-level agenda-setting level, repetition of these topics maintains the salience of environmental and governance issues. At the second level, downstreaming is attached to attributes of risk, vulnerability, oversight, health, and impact on living spaces [18].

For IWIP, this external agenda functions as an input for reading the direction of issues, rather than as a complete list that must all be answered. Interviews show that the company acknowledges the role of NGOs and environmental media in sustaining attention to certain issues. However, this acknowledgment is not always followed by direct engagement or response. The company first assesses the issue's relationship to its authority, activities, internal data, and potential for escalation.

*"We first read the issues that arise and look at their substance. Not every issue is directly responded to by us." (YS)*

This statement shows that the external agenda setting becomes material for organizational environmental scanning. This finding broadens media monitoring from merely counting news coverage to a process of reading which issues and attributes are emphasized, which actors are driving them, and whether the issue can move from a particular channel to mainstream media, government attention, or other stakeholders.

Table 3. Mapping of the external issue agenda and its implications for IWIP's strategy

| Source/context | Data-driven dominant issues and attributes | Implications for the company's response agenda |
|---|---|---|
| JATAM | Industrial governance, policy status, state-industry relations, socio-ecological impacts, and accountability | Requires a reading of policy risks, the relevance of authority, and the possibility of escalation to government and public stakeholders |
| Mongabay | Environment, public health, coastal communities, water quality, captive coal-fired power plants, and field data | Requires technical validation, coordination of environmental/operational functions, and readiness of explainable data |
| Media and digital space | Issue recurrence, deployment speed, angle capture from other sources, and rapid response pressure | Requires cross-channel monitoring as well as decisions on whether the response provides context or magnifies exposure |

### 3.2 Selecting the Response Agenda: Not Every Issue Becomes the Company's Public Agenda

The second stage of agenda building is selecting the response agenda. Interview data show that the company distinguishes issues that need a public response, issues that are sufficiently monitored, and issues used for internal evaluation. This decision considers the issue's relevance to the company, the level of escalation, its impact on society and operations, government attention, data availability, and communication risk [19].

This selection reflects organizational gatekeeping. Public relations functions not only to disseminate information but also to determine which issues deserve to enter the organization's communication agenda. A decision not to respond does not mean the company has not read the issue. In some situations, an open response is likely to give additional attention to an issue that has not yet developed widely or does not yet have sufficient data to explain it accurately.

*"We first discuss whether the issue really needs to be responded to, who should be involved, and what form of communication is most appropriate." (MA)*

*"There are issues we sufficiently just monitor. Not everything must be answered publicly, because doing so could actually amplify the issue." (MF)*

From an agenda-building perspective, this stage involves determining the internal agenda. The company does not simply follow the external agenda but forms a priority hierarchy based on strategic interest and its capacity to provide information. This finding also shows that media salience is not the sole basis for decisions. A high-intensity issue may not be addressed if it is not directly related to the company, while a low-exposure issue can become a priority if it directly affects society, operations, or stakeholder relations.

Table 4. Criteria for response-agenda selection based on interview data

| Criteria | Implementation in communication decisions |
|---|---|
| Relevance and authority | Assess the relationship between issues and the company's activities, responsibilities, and space of authority |
| Escalation | Observe the development of issues in the mainstream media, digital media, public attention, and the government |
| Impact | Assess potential influence on society, operations, stakeholders, and organizational reputation |
| Data readiness | Ensure information can be verified and explained before issues enter the company's public agenda |
| Communication risks | Consider whether the response will add context or increase attention to the issue |

### 3.3 Coordination and Validation as the Foundation of the Corporate Agenda

Once an issue is selected to enter the response agenda, communication is not immediately published. The next stage is cross-functional coordination and data validation. Environmental issues require confirmation from the environment function, operational issues require data from technical functions, while employment, social, legal, or policy issues involve the relevant units. This process shows that the corporate agenda is formed collectively, not solely by the communication team [20].

Coordination functions to align understanding of the issue's substance, limit claims to available data, and determine which party has the authority to provide information. Public relations connects media needs with internal technical knowledge. Thus, agenda building at the organizational level is also a process of internal negotiation between the need for speed and the need for accuracy.

*"We make sure the data is correct first. If it relates to the environment, we confirm with the environment team; if operational, with operations. Only after everything is aligned is the communication drafted." (MF)*

*"We cannot immediately produce a response. All information must first go through a cross-check process so that the message conveyed remains consistent with actual field conditions." (MA)*

These findings clarify that data are not merely a supporting element of the message but become a precondition for an issue to enter the external communication agenda. When data are not yet ready, the company tends to delay its response or limit the materials published. This pattern explains why responses to technical issues are not always as fast as the media cycle. However, the validation process also functions to maintain credibility and reduce the risk of inconsistent information across functions.

Table 5. Cross-functional roles in the agenda-building process

| Function | Contribution to the formation of a communication agenda |
|---|---|
| External Relations | Read strategic issues, stakeholder interests, and directions of external coordination |
| Corporate Communication/Media Relations | Monitor, prioritize, manage media, and coordinate responses |
| Communication & CSR | Support validation of social, environmental, and public relations program data |
| Technical functions | Confirm data environment, operational, safety, labor, legal, and other technical aspects |
| Creative Content | Translate validated information into narrative, storytelling, visual, and digital content |
| Management | Provide direction and approval for issues of strategic impact or importance |

### 3.4 Constructing Attributes and Messages: From Technical Data to a Communicable Agenda

Verified data are then translated into communication attributes and messages. At this stage, the company determines which aspects to emphasize so the issue can be explained in a way that is relevant to the public. Based on the company's content, recurring attributes include environmental management, occupational safety, social programs, human resource development, local employment, sustainability, green industry, and development contribution [21].

Within the framework of second-level agenda setting, this attribute selection forms the corporate agenda regarding how nickel downstreaming is explained. The company does not merely present the object "IWIP" or "downstreaming," but links it to attributes of management, safety, responsibility, and development benefits. The analytical focus lies on which attributes are given salience in communication output and how those attributes are constructed into the company's agenda.

Storytelling and visualization serve as presentation techniques that make technical information easier to understand. The thesis data show that the creative function does not change the facts but changes how they are conveyed. This process matters in agenda building because validated information must be packaged into material that is accessible to media and the public [22].

*"Sometimes we use storytelling, sometimes visuals, sometimes content that explains the process. So the public can see a more complete picture." (AN)*

Beyond selecting attributes, the company manages its communication tone. All informants emphasized factual, professional, moderate, and non-emotional language. This tone becomes a delivery strategy that shapes how the corporate agenda enters the media space. Informants use non-confrontational language to avoid escalation and keep communication focused on data and company activities.

*"We avoid reactive or emotional language, especially language that seems to harshly refute." (MF)*

*"Public relations must use language, wording, and narratives that are factual, professional, and data-based." (MA)*

### 3.5 Owned Media and Media Placement as Agenda-Building Channels

The corporate agenda is then distributed through owned media and media placement. Analysis of 13 IWIP Instagram posts from January to July 2025 shows a dominance of environment and sustainability content (five posts), followed by CSR and community empowerment (four posts), community infrastructure (two posts), and one post each on occupational safety/health and education/human resource development. This distribution shows an owned-media agenda oriented toward representing the company's activities and programs [23]

Owned media gives the company space to maintain continuity, determine visuals, arrange the sequence of information, and directly display evidence of activities. The company positions this channel as a space for explanation, not as a tool for controlling other parties' narratives. In other words, owned media consistently sustains the corporate agenda when external issues move quickly, and not all of the company's context receives space in news coverage.

*"We use owned media to complement public opinion, not to silence or control other parties' narratives." (YS)*

Table 6. Distribution of IWIP owned-media themes, January–July 2025

| Content themes | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Environment and sustainability | 5 | 38,5% |
| CSR and community empowerment | 4 | 30,8% |
| Community infrastructure | 2 | 15,4% |
| Occupational safety and health | 1 | 7,7% |
| HR education and development | 1 | 7,7% |
| Total | 13 | 100% |

Meanwhile, the 152 media placement publications from February to July 2025 show a broader agenda. The largest number of publications relate to media visits (38 publications) and safety and occupational health (36 publications). Other themes include local employment absorption, young talent development, job fairs, Labor Day appreciation, strengthening local MSMEs, green nickel industry, and Ramadan Safari (community outreach) activities [24].

Media placement broadens reach and connects company activities to downstreaming, national development, employment, safety, and green industry. From an agenda-building perspective, media placement represents the company's effort to supply issues, attributes, data, and access to sources to the media. However, this study does not test whether such materials causally determine the editorial agenda. The term used is therefore "agenda-building effort," not evidence of successful agenda transfer.

Table 7. Distribution of IWIP media placement themes, February–July 2025

| Theme | Number of publications | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Media visit | 38 | 25,0% |
| Security and K3 | 36 | 23,7% |
| Absorption of local labor | 15 | 9,9% |
| Development of young talent | 15 | 9,9% |
| Job fair | 13 | 8,6% |
| Labor Day Appreciation | 13 | 8,6% |
| Strengthening local MSMEs | 12 | 7,9% |
| Green nickel industry | 12 | 7,9% |
| Safari Ramadan | 8 | 5,3% |
| Total | 152 | 100% |

### 3.6 Synthesis of IWIP's Corporate Agenda-Building Process

Taken together, these findings form six stages of corporate agenda building. First, the company faces an external issue agenda that already carries a certain salience. Second, the company monitors and maps the issue based on its substance, sources, attributes, and escalation. Third, the organization selects a response agenda. Fourth, the selected issue is coordinated and validated. Fifth, the organization translates information into a corporate agenda by selecting attributes, messages, storytelling, visuals, and tone. Sixth, the agenda is distributed through owned media and media placement and sustained on an ongoing basis [25].

This process shows that IWIP's response strategy cannot be reduced to clarification activity. The company's response is a series of internal decisions about what to discuss, what data to use, which attributes to emphasize, whom to involve, and which channel to choose. This finding aligns with agenda building that positions the organization as a source shaping the media agenda, while also adding a strong internal dimension in a technical industry: data readiness and cross-functional authority become preconditions before an agenda can be pushed into the media space.

This strategy can be summarized as selective, data-based, non-confrontational, and long-term oriented. Selective means not every issue becomes the company's public agenda. Data-based means the agenda is only built after verification. Non-confrontational means communication seeks to keep the focus on information and activities rather than confrontation with other actors. Long-term oriented means the company sustains its agenda through consistent publication, not only when negative issues arise.

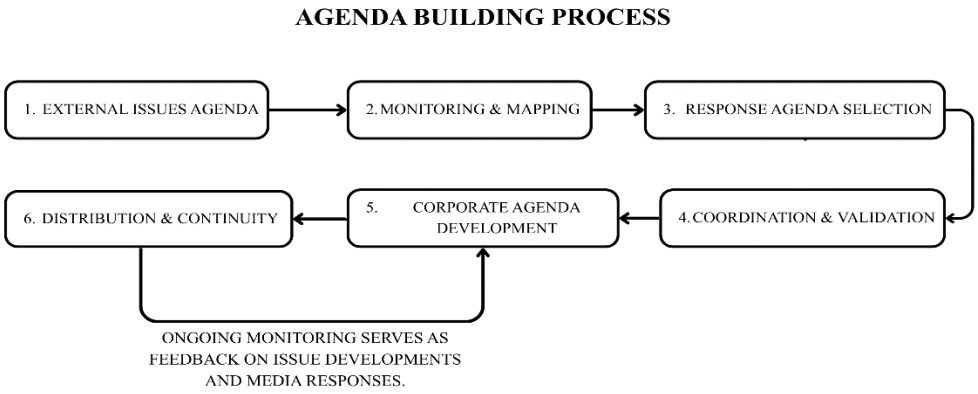



Figure 1. Model of IWIP's corporate agenda-building process based on research data

Table 8. Summary of IWIP's agenda-building strategy

| Stages | Practice based on thesis data | Strategic function |
|---|---|---|
| External issues agenda | Read the issues and attributes that develop through NGOs, environmental media, mainstream media, and digital spaces | Identifying sources of pressure and direction of attention |
| Monitoring and mapping | Assess the substance, escalation, relevance, stakeholders, and potential impact | Build a basis for communication decisions |
| Response agenda selection | Determine issues to be responded to, monitored, or used as internal evaluation | Prevent over-response and prioritize strategic issues |
| Coordination and validation | Involving technical, CSR, external relations, legal, communication, and management functions | Maintain the accuracy, authority, and consistency of information |
| Preparation of corporate agenda | Choose attributes, data, messages, storytelling, visuals, as well as a factual and moderate tone | Translate technical issues into understandable communication |
| Channel distribution | Owned media for activity and continuity; Media placement for wider reach and context | Build a presence on the corporate agenda in the media space |
| Continuity and evaluation | Communication is carried out consistently, and monitoring continues after publication | Shifting practices from instantaneous responses to preventive communication |

## 4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that IWIP's corporate communication strategy in responding to nickel downstreaming issues can be explained through the agenda-building process. The external issue agenda is first monitored and mapped, then selected based on relevance, escalation, impact, authority, data readiness, and communication risk. Selected issues are not immediately published but go through cross-functional coordination and validation before being translated into corporate attributes and messages.

Agenda setting reveals differences in salience between the external issue agenda and the company's communication. JATAM and Mongabay emphasize environment, health, governance, and socio-ecological impact more, while IWIP emphasizes environmental management, occupational safety, social programs, employment, HR development, sustainability, and development contribution more. These differences reflect differences in the issues and attributes prioritized at the first-level and second-level agenda-setting stages.

Agenda building explains how IWIP constructs its communication agenda through monitoring, response selection, data validation, message construction, storytelling, visuals, moderate tone, and the differentiated function of owned media and media placement. Owned media sustains agenda continuity through activities and programs, while media placement broadens reach and situates issues within the contexts of downstreaming, safety, employment, sustainability, and development.

This study contributes an empirical explanation of the relationship between the external issue agenda and the internal process of corporate agenda construction in the nickel downstreaming industry. The findings show that agenda building in an industry with technical issues depends heavily on coordination, data authority, and information readiness. The study does not conclude that the company's agenda has influenced the public agenda or fully determined the media's editorial agenda, since the research data focus on internal processes and communication outputs.

The study's limitations lie in its single case-study design, the January–July 2025 period, and its reliance on the company's internal perspective. Future research could compare company communication materials with organic media coverage, involve journalists and external stakeholders, and test the relationship among the corporate, media, and public agendas.

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