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# Food Security Communications Toolkit

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This toolkit was prepared in the context of the EC-FAO Programme on “Linking Information and Decision Making to Improve Food Security.”

The Programme is funded by the European Union’s Food Security Thematic Programme and implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

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## Introduction

Food security professionals increasingly realize that they must use communications strategically for their work to have a maximum impact. While most organizations have invested heavily in food security analysis and research, many still need to enhance their communications to ensure their findings reach their intended users and action is taken.

This toolkit is geared towards helping food security professionals develop a communication strategy and communicate more effectively with their target audiences. Specific sections of the toolkit focus on policy makers and the media, because of the important role they play in implementing and influencing food security policies.

The toolkit also looks at specific information products such as policy briefs, reports and early warning bulletins, and suggests ways to structure and improve them. A section on writing effectively, which focuses on grammar and style, makes sure that written documents are easy to read. Finally, the toolkit gives tips for using the internet, social media and Web 2.0 tools as these technologies offer unprecedented opportunities for engaging in two way dialogues with global audiences. The toolkit also includes readymade templates and dozens of tips and tricks distilled from many years of experience.

While aimed at professionals working in food security related fields, the lessons in this toolkit can easily be applied to many other fields.

## DESIGNING YOUR COMMUNICATION STRATEGY



1.1

1.1 Identify and analyse your audiences

1.2 Define your communication objectives and messages

1.3 Select the best channels for presenting your information

1.4 Plan and evaluate your communication activities

## Learning objectives

At the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- identify the major audiences of an organization dealing with food security;
- apply criteria for selecting and prioritizing audiences of a communication strategy for food security information; and
- identify the characteristics and information needs of priority audiences.

## Introduction

Why does a project need a communication strategy?

.....  
*It is a way of ensuring that communication efforts help achieve the project's goals, and that they are coordinated and effective.*

*It also helps clarify what staff, time and resources are needed, and how to use them*  
.....

## Outline of a Communication Strategy

The design of a communication strategy consists of the following **elements**:

- Identify and analyse your audiences
- Define your communication objectives
- Decide on the messages to convey to your audiences
- Select the channels to use
- Create a communication workplan
- Evaluate your communication activities

This lesson looks at the first element: **Identify and analyse your audiences**.

## Analysing your audience

Most organizations have to deal with the following **types of audiences**:

- **clients**: actual or potential project beneficiaries. These may be men or women, young or old, disabled or ill, farmers or pastoralists, landowners or the landless, from different ethnic groups, etc. Most are poor, but some are better off than others;
- .....



- **intermediaries:** organizations or individuals who provide information or services to the clients. Examples: agricultural extension workers, agricultural input suppliers, traders, microfinance organizations;
- **peers:** other organizations or projects engaged in the same area or in similar work, partner organizations;
- **donors:** organizations that provide funding (or that might do so in the future);
- **policymakers:** people and organizations that make decisions that affect the clients or the project. Examples: local and national government officials, ministers and senior civil servants, parliament members;
- **the public:** other people not directly concerned with the project, but who may be interested in food security;
- **the media:** newspapers, magazines, television, radio, websites. They are not really an audience in themselves, but they are an important means for reaching other audiences, so it's a good idea to deal with them separately;
- **internal audiences:** managers and staff of the organization.

## Developing a list of audiences

To correctly analyse your audience you should **start by developing a list** of the main audience categories, then writing down examples of each audience type.

Here some practical suggestions for listing audiences:

- Get **other people to help you** list the audiences, to make sure you don't miss anyone.
- Check the project documents to make sure that you **include all the audiences** that the project is supposed to serve.
- Try to be as **specific** as possible.

.....  
*For example, "women" is probably too general. "Pregnant women and women with small children in rural areas" is more specific.*  
.....

- If necessary, **split some audience categories** into smaller groups.
-

.....  
*For example, two ethnic groups may speak different languages.*

*Women and men may need different types of information*  
 .....

- Instead of just listing organizations, think of **who** in each organization you want to reach. The manager? The project specialists? The secretarial staff? The field staff? That will help you define your audience more closely.
- **Combine groups** for certain purposes (it can be difficult and expensive to target a lot of different audiences). For example, you may be able to send the same newsletter about project activities to donors and peers, but may have to shorten it for policymakers.

If you are having problems coming up with categories, there is another way to develop a list of your audiences:

- Write the names of different individuals, organizations or social groups you need to communicate with on small pieces of paper.
- Spread the pieces of paper out on a table.
- Sort them into groups that have common characteristics and information needs.
- Label each group – for example, “donors”, “women beneficiaries” and “project staff”.
- If you end up with a large number of different groups, try to combine them until you end up with a manageable number – between 5 and 10.

## Prioritizing your audiences

You have probably realized by now that some audiences are more important than others. You need to focus limited time and resources on serving the priority audiences.

You can divide your audiences into four categories:

- 1. Top priority - Must communicate:** you must communicate with this audience in order to achieve the project’s goals
  - 2. Second priority - Advisable to communicate:** communicating with this audience is useful and helps forward the project’s goals
  - 3. Third priority - Nice to communicate:** communicating with this audience would be good, but will not help to achieve the project’s goals
  - 4. Bottom priority - Not necessary to communicate:** the project should not try to serve this audience
- .....

Rather than relying on your own judgement alone, you should get **your colleagues to help you** prioritize your audiences.

## Defining the audiences' characteristics

List the **characteristics** of the **priority audiences**.

Think of things like their number, location, education, language, background, organization and employment.

### Example: Audiences' characteristics

Name of audience: .....

Characteristics	Question	Example
Number	How many people (or organizations) are there?	A small number; hundreds, thousands, millions of people
Location	Where are they located?	Scattered in remote rural areas, concentrated in a few hard-hit locations, in a capital city, in a foreign country
Education	What type of education do they have? In what subjects?	Literacy levels, educational level attained, subjects studied
Language	What languages do they speak?	International languages, national and local languages
Background	Where do they come from? What are they like?	Local people, migrants, refugees, foreign specialists...
Organization	Do they belong to an organization?	Members of farmers' associations, staff of a ministry...
Livelihood and employment	How do they earn a living? What type of work do they do? What are their job responsibilities?	Crop farming, livestock raising, unskilled labour, reliant on food aid...

There are different ways to **gather information** about your audience:

- **Check reports and other literature.** Your project's baseline survey or design documents may already have much of the information you need.
- **Discuss with colleagues or partners** who interact with the audience. They may have insights. Ask several people to get different viewpoints.

- **Conduct an informal survey.** Take every opportunity to meet members of the audience. Get to know them as well as you can. Ask them about themselves, where they get information, and the sorts of information they need.
- **Conduct a formal survey.** You may be able to build communication-specific questions into a survey your project is already planning. Rather than using a formal questionnaire, consider conducting a series of focus-group meetings or a participatory rural appraisal to learn more.

How should you **gather information** on your audience? This depends on two factors:

1. the **size and complexity** of your project or organization  
In a small project, you probably do not have many resources, so you will have to rely on the first three methods (Checking reports and other literature; discussions with colleagues or partners who interact with the audience and informal surveys). In a big project, it may well be worth doing a formal survey;
2. the **nature of the audience**  
You may be able to organize a formal survey of beneficiaries, but a formal survey is not suitable for audiences such as donors and policymakers. For these audiences, you will have to rely on information you can gather in other ways.

## Defining audiences knowledge, attitudes and practice

In addition to audiences' characteristics, you should also understand:

- **What the audiences already know about the subject (knowledge)**  
Are the audiences aware about it at all? Are they experts? Or something in between?
- **What their opinions are (attitudes)**  
Are they in favour of the solutions your project is proposing? Or are they opposed?
- **What they currently do about it (practice)**  
Are they already pushing for the changes your project proposes? Or are they doing nothing?

Knowing these things **will help you choose the messages** you send to each audience.

For example, if they are already pushing for the changes your project proposes, then maybe you need to provide them with more evidence they can use as ammunition. Or, if they are doing nothing, you will have to motivate them to take action.

**Example: classification of information gathered on one of the priority target audiences of a project promoting food security**

Name of audience: Pastoralists (project beneficiaries)

	Question	Findings
<b>Existing knowledge</b>	What do they know about food security?	Detailed traditional knowledge of rainfall patterns, grazing areas and animal management.
<b>Existing attitudes</b>	What do they think about it?	Major concerns are to maintain herds and locate good grazing and water.
<b>Current practice</b>	What do they do about it?	Split herd and send different parts to distant areas in hope of finding grazing and water. Send family members to food distribution points to pick up grain.

## Determining the audiences' current source of information

Where do the audience currently **get information** about the subject?

Do they read reports? Do they listen to the radio? Do they attend meetings? Do they get information from their friends and neighbours? Do they have access to the internet?

Knowing this will help you determine what **channels** you can use to reach the audience.

Perhaps you can use the same channels, or maybe you can think of new channels that no one else is using.

It will also help you to find out what **other types of information** the audience is using.

For example, maybe **another organization** is also providing them with information that supports or contradicts yours.

**Example: analysis of information sources**

Name of audience: Pastoralists (project beneficiaries)

	Question	Findings
<b>Information sources</b>	Where do they currently get information? What media do they use?	Informal exchange via clan leaders. Discussions at watering points and markets. No print or broadcast media. Some use mobile phones in towns. NGOs provide training. Some children attend school.

**Defining your audiences' interests and information needs**

Finally, you should think of your audiences' **interests and information needs** concerning your subject.

Different audiences are often interested in very different things.

An audience may need several **different types of information**. For example, donors and policymakers may want "hard" data on prices, food supplies and nutrition levels, as well as "soft" human-interest stories that show the impact of a project.

Remember that what **they say** they need may be different from what **you think** they need!

Here, you should think of what **they say** they need.

### Example: types of information audiences say they need

Name of audience: Pastoralists (project beneficiaries)

	Question	Findings
Information sources	What types of information do they need?	Market prices for cattle, location of trading opportunities, availability of vaccines and parasite treatments.

Name of audience: Actual and potential donors

Information sources	What types of information do they need?	Market prices for cattle, location of trading opportunities, availability of vaccines and parasite treatments.
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## Summary

A **communication strategy** is a way of ensuring that communication efforts help achieve the project's goals, and that they are coordinated and effective. It also helps you understand what staff and resources are needed, and how to use them.

**Identifying and analysing your audiences** is the first step in designing a communication strategy.

As a first step, you should **list your audiences** and identify the most important ones (**priority audiences**).

For each of the priority audiences you should identify:

- **characteristics** (i.e. number, location, education, language, background, organization and employment);
- **knowledge, attitude and practice** on the project's subject;
- **information sources**; and
- **interests and information needs**.

By defining your audience's interests and information needs, you have completed the first stage in the process of designing a communication strategy.

## Annex I: Audience categories

You may use the following table to list your audiences.

Audience Category	Members
Clients	
Intermediaries	
Peers	
Donors	
Policymakers	
The public	
The media	
Internal	



## Annex II: Audience characteristics

You may use the following table to describe each primary audience.

Name of audience: .....		
Characteristics	Question	Findings
Number	How many people (or organizations) are there?	
Location	Where are they located?	
Education	What type of education do they have? In what subjects?	
Language	What languages do they speak?	
Background	Where do they come from? What are they like?	
Organization	Do they belong to an organization?	
Livelihood and employment	How do they earn a living? What type of work do they do? What are their job responsibilities?	
<b>Knowledge, attitude and practice</b>		
Existing knowledge	What do they know about food security?	
Existing attitudes	What do they think about it?	
Current practice	What do they do about it?	
<b>Information sources</b>		
Where do they currently get information? What media do they use?		
<b>Information needs</b>		
What types of information do they need?		

## Annex III: Example of audience characteristics

The following table shows how you can describe your primary audiences.

Name of audience: Actual and potential donors		
Characteristics	Question	Findings
Number	How many people (or organizations) are there?	3 actual donors (five key staff members in each organization). 12 potential donor organizations.
Location	Where are they located?	Capital city of country. Occasional visits to field. In-country staff make funding decisions up to €100,000. Staff in donor country make funding decisions for projects over \$100,000.
Education	What type of education do they have? In what subjects?	Postgraduate degrees in development or related subjects. Specialist skills, but not necessarily in food security.
Language	What languages do they speak?	English, French. No local languages. Foreigners with commitment to development but limited field experience.
Background	Where do they come from? What are they like?	Foreigners with commitment to development but limited field experience. National staff with more field experience, but tend to have urban rather than rural backgrounds.
Organization	Do they belong to an organization?	Staff of donor organization. Typically in job for maximum of 3 years.
Livelihood and employment	How do they earn a living? What type of work do they do? What are their job responsibilities?	Designing, monitoring and evaluating projects, preparing reports for home government agencies. Often responsible for several projects at same time.

## DESIGNING YOUR COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

1.1 Identify and analyse your audiences

1.2 Define your communication objectives and messages

1.3 Select the best channels for presenting your information

1.4 Plan and evaluate your communication activities

1.2

## Learning objectives

At the end of this lesson, you will be able to identify the key issues to consider when you define your communication objectives and messages.

## Introduction

The first step in designing a communication strategy for a project promoting food security is to identify and analyze your audience. The second and third steps are to **define your objectives and key messages**.

Steps in designing a communication strategy:

- Identify and analyse your audiences
- Define your communication objectives
- Decide on the messages to convey to your audiences
- Select the channels to use
- Create a communication workplan
- Evaluate your communication activities

## Deciding on your objectives

What do you want to achieve in communicating with your audience?

First decide on your communication objectives for **each** audience. These objectives will depend on the **overall project objectives**.

Communication activities should support the project objectives in achieving a change in the following three characteristics of the project audiences:

- **knowledge:** what new things do you want them to learn about your subject?
- **attitudes:** what changes in opinions do you want to stimulate?
- **practice:** what changes do you advocate in what the audience does? What new things would you like them to do, and what things should they stop doing?

**Example: Desired changes for audiences  
(based on project objectives)**

Desired change in:	
<b>Knowledge</b>	They should be informed of the latest market prices for cattle.
<b>Attitudes</b>	They should want to sell cattle when the animals are healthy and prices are good, rather waiting until they are dying of thirst.
<b>Practice</b>	They should sell cattle when prices are good.

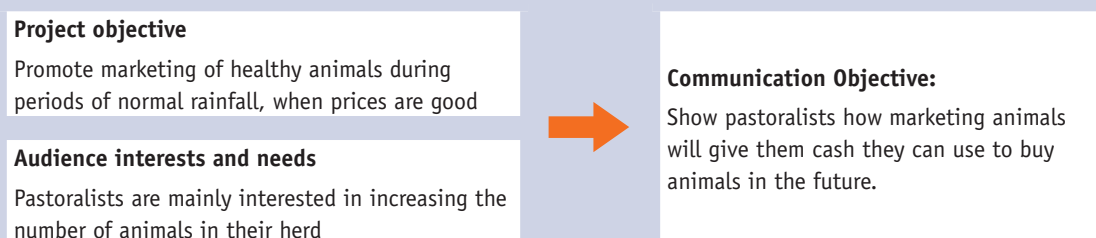
## Relating your objectives to the audiences' needs

In order to define your communication objectives:

- **project objectives** should be **linked with audiences' information interests and needs**. Sometimes, the match will be good (if your audience says they want information on market prices, and one of your project's objectives is to provide them with this information, then it will be very easy to match their interests and needs!). However, the match can be less obvious.
- you need to find ways to **relate** project objectives to the audience's interests and needs.

Remember to take the audience's current knowledge, attitudes and practice into account.

**Example: Matching audience needs with project objectives**



## Formulating your objectives

Communication objectives have to be **well formulated**. This will help you to:

- **focus on your communication activities**, design messages and choose the right communication channels. Well developed objectives can be used to justify spending resources on your communication activities; and
- **monitor and evaluate your activities**, as they enable you to check the effectiveness of communication activities and adjust them if necessary.

### Tips for developing communication objectives

Make your objective...	Answer the question:
specific	How many people do you want to communicate with?
measurable	How can you collect the data?
appropriate	Is it relevant to project objectives?
realistic	Is it not too ambitious?
time bound	By when?

### Examples of well developed communication objectives

#### Practice

To increase the number of healthy cattle sold during periods of normal rainfall by 10,000 a year by December 2012.

#### Attitudes

To persuade 1,000 pastoralists that they would be better off selling healthy cattle when prices are good, rather than waiting until a drought.

#### Knowledge

To increase the number of healthy cattle sold during periods of normal rainfall by 10,000 a year by December 2012.

## Converting objectives to messages

For each of your objectives and each of your audiences, you should think of the **basic messages** you want to convey.

- Messages should **address the audience’s interests and attract their attention**.
- Basic messages should be kept **simple**. Details can be added later if necessary.

### Example: convert an objective to a set of messages for a specific audience (pastoralists)

To promote marketing of healthy animals during periods of normal rainfall when prices are good



A weak animal is not worth anything  
A good animal means good money  
You can earn ten times more by selling a few weeks earlier  
Sell a few animals each month to pay for school fees

## Match your messages to your audience and objectives

You should make sure that your message matches your audience and your objectives. Specifically:

- **Match the language and style to your audience**  
For example, don’t write in a scientific style for farmers
- **Don’t tell the audience something they already know**  
(unless you use it as a basis for telling them something new)
- **Give the audience information they can use**

For example: Don’t tell farmers that they must control soil erosion. Instead (or as well), tell them how to stop a gully from forming on their land. Don’t ask people to do something impossible (like “save the world”). Instead, tell them something they can do (like “write a letter to your member of parliament” or “donate to organization XYZ”).

## Messages that move your audience

You must find a way to **move your audience**, pushing them to take action.

Remember that you want to cause change...

*Imagine that you want to raise money from individuals for your school farm. Your message will tell them how the children are growing their own vegetables and will not give them statistics about poverty and child malnutrition.*

Identify some good stories about how people faced a problem is more motivating than just providing information.

Other than identifying good stories, there are other ways to **move your audience**:

➤ **Create a snappy slogan**

Make it short and memorable, and use it in all your publicity materials (remember the value of repetition).

➤ **Use good presentations**

That means good visual design, good audio and visuals, and clear and interesting graphics.

Don't make your materials too slick and glossy, though: people may think you're spending too much on communication and not enough on the activity itself.

➤ **Tie your message to something that people can relate to**

For example: "Imagine if you had to send your own children to school each morning hungry..."

➤ **Give the audience something to do**

For example: "One euro can buy seeds for a vegetable plot for a whole class – here's how to donate..."

Food security can be a highly technical field. But most of our audiences do not understand and are not interested in complex details. They need simple information that is **clear** and **easy to understand**.

A good exercise is to take a complicated piece of text and to try to translate it into simpler language for different audiences.



**Example: take a complicated piece of text and to try to translate it into simpler language for different audiences.**

**Original text (complicated)**

The major challenge to food security in Africa is its underdeveloped agricultural sector that is characterized by over-reliance on primary agriculture, low fertility soils, minimal use of external farm inputs, environmental degradation, significant food crop loss both pre- and post- harvest, minimal value addition and product differentiation, and inadequate food storage and preservation that result in significant commodity price fluctuation.

**Simpler text**

In Africa, the major challenge to food security is the underdeveloped agricultural sector. Many people earn their income from farming. Soils are poor, farmers use little fertilizer or other inputs, and soil erosion is common. Farmers lose much of their crops to pests and diseases, either before or after the harvest. They add little value to the crop (for example by grading or processing it), and cannot store the crop, so are forced to sell it straight after harvest when prices are low.

**Even simpler text**

Farming problems mean that many Africans go hungry. Many people cannot grow enough to eat or sell. The soils are poor, heavy rain washes the soil away, and insects attack the crops. Many farmers cannot afford to buy fertilizers. They get low prices because they sell their crop straight away. They would earn more if they processed it, or packaged it ready for sale.

Note that there are slight variations in meaning between the three versions. The best version to use will depend on the audience.

## Summary

Your **communication objectives** should be related to your audiences' information interests and needs as well as match the project objectives.

It's important to formulate the objectives correctly in order to better focus on, monitor and evaluate your communication activities.

For each of your objectives and each of your audiences, you should then develop the **messages** you want to convey.

Your messages should address the audience's interests and attract their attention.

It is important that you provide simple information that is clear and **easy to understand**.

By defining your communication objectives and the messages you want to convey to your audiences, you have completed the second and third stages in the process of designing a communication strategy.

---

## Annex I: Tips for developing messages that move

Just providing information is not enough to cause change. You must find a way to move your audience. Here are some ideas of how to do this:

Tip	Examples and questions
<b>Identify some good stories about how people faced a problem</b>	If you want to raise money from individuals for your school farm, don't give them statistics about poverty and malnutrition. Instead, tell them how the children are growing their own vegetables
<b>Create a snappy slogan</b>	Make it short and memorable, and use it in all your publicity materials (remember the value of repetition)
<b>Use good presentation</b>	That means good visual design, good audio and visuals, and clear and interesting graphics. Don't make your materials too slick and glossy, though: people may think you're spending too much on communication and not enough on the activity itself
<b>Tie your message to something that people can relate to</b>	"Imagine if you had to send your own children to school each morning hungry..."
<b>Give the audience something to do</b>	"One euro can buy seeds for a vegetable plot for a whole class – here's how to donate..."

## DESIGNING YOUR COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

- 1.1 Identify and analyse your audiences
- 1.2 Define your communication objectives and messages
- 1.3 Select the best channels for presenting your information
- 1.4 Plan and evaluate your communication activities



1.3

## Learning objectives

At the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- describe the key characteristics of various communication channels; and
- identify criteria for selecting the most appropriate channels for a specific audience.

## Introduction

The first step in designing a communication strategy for a project promoting food security is to identify and analyse your audience. Then communication objective for each audience has to be developed and converted into messages.

Steps in designing a communication strategy:

- Identify and analyse your audiences
- Define your communication objectives
- Decide on the messages to convey to your audiences
- **Select the channels to use**
- Create a communication workplan
- Evaluate your communication activities

This lesson looks at the fourth element: **Select the channels for presenting your information.**

## Communication channels

.....  
*A communication channel is a method of getting a message to an audience.*  
.....

There are many ways of doing this. Here are some possible communication channels:

- via a radio or TV programme
- on a poster
- on the packaging of a product
- by letter or email
- in a phone call
- as part of a training course or meeting

The word “**media**” is often used to mean the same thing as a communication channel, but the mass media (newspapers, television, radio, etc.) are only one type of media.

There are many ways of classifying **communication channels**. One of them is based on the size of the audience they can serve:

- **Large Audiences:** mass media, print, outdoor
- **Medium-sized Audiences:** electronic and small media
- **Small Audiences:** group, one-on-one

## Communication channels with large audiences

Communication channels with large audiences include:

### ➤ **Mass media**

Radio, TV, newspapers, magazines, music, cinema and drama tend to reach audiences mainly in **urban areas**. However, these communication channels are good for **reaching illiterate audiences** and those with minimal education.

Mass media convey **short-lived information** (e.g. there is the risk of listeners missing a radio programme) and are professionally managed by **journalists and editors**, so your project does not control what appears.

You need to prepare information in a **form** that mass media can use, and the product (e.g. a professional-looking video for TV broadcast) can be **expensive to produce**.

### ➤ **Print media**

Books, brochures, pamphlets, calendars, diaries, newsletters and information sheets can be produced **by the project alone** and can convey **fairly long-lived** information, since people can keep them to read later. However, they can reach **fewer people** than mass media, they depend on **literacy** and distributing them to the audience can be a problem.

Print media does not allow interaction with the audience.

### ➤ **Outdoor**

Banners, billboards, signboards, roadside advertisements and loudspeakers provide **high visibility** and are good for raising awareness. However, they can carry only a small amount of information (e.g. a slogan) and have a **limited lifespan**.

## Communication channels for medium-sized audiences

Channels with medium-sized audiences include:

### ► Electronic media

Computers, internet, CD-ROMs, email, chatting, social networking media, telephones and SMS offer a wide variety of possibilities. They are developing very quickly. Their audience is limited by their access, they can allow **interactivity** and reach audiences that are **dispersed** – all over the world. Mobile phones are becoming very widespread, even in rural areas. Electronic media can also **support other media** (e.g. putting reports online).

### ► Small media

Photos, notice boards, certificates, displays, exhibits, flip charts, logos, t-shirts, hats, badges and buttons are easy to **combine with group channels** (e.g. using a flip chart during a training session). They can carry only a small amount of information (e.g. a slogan or announcement).

## Communication channels for small audiences

Communication channels with small audiences include:

### ► Group channels

Training, meetings, field visits, demonstrations, participatory appraisal, drama, street theatre, speeches, sermons and video presentations are effective, especially for **practical demonstrations**. They allow audience **feedback**, since people can ask questions and comment, and can stimulate **discussion** among audience members. Group channels tend to be **expensive per person reached** (you may need to pay for facilities and accommodation) and require **expert staff** to present and answer questions.

### ► One-on-one channels

Letters, memos, meetings (formal, informal), phone calls and email can be very effective for **very small audiences**. They allow audience **feedback** and discussion and can be **personalized** to suit individual audience members. These channels are very **time-consuming**.

## Audience size

Summarizing the characteristics of the various communication channels...

### Channels with large audiences are:

- cheap per person reached
- good for raising awareness and increasing knowledge

### Channels with small audiences are:

- expensive per person reached
- effective in changing the behaviour of individuals
- easy to target to specific audiences
- allow feedback or discussion

## Choosing a channel

To choose among different channels, three different criteria should be applied:

### 1. The audience

Different channels can be used to reach different **audiences**.

Well-educated audiences need printed, technical information they can refer to, so a written report is most appropriate for them. Illiterate audiences need to see things and try things out, this can be done through a demonstration. Audiences that need to see how things work need more technical details: a training course is a good way to do this.

Some audiences, such as journalists, need pre-packaged information in a form they can use immediately: a press release is appropriate.

.....  
*Some channels may be suitable for more than one audience, for example, a field visit may be useful for both donors and journalists.*  
.....

### 2. The messages you want to convey

The channel has to match the message. For example, if you need to convey detailed technical information, radio is probably not the best channel as it is hard for the audience to remember technical details.

Detailed and technical information may need several pages of explanation, so a manual may be the best choice: readers can always go back to the manual later to check on the details.

In the case of information that changes constantly, for example market prices, an SMS service (or perhaps a regular radio programme) is a good way to reach users.

For short and “to the point” information, for example a summary of project activities, the best channel is a project brief. Most people find it easiest to learn how to do something by watching, trying it out themselves, and asking questions. A training course or demonstration makes this possible.



*Several combinations of messages and channels are possible.*



### 3. The cost-effectiveness of different channels

When you have a choice among several different channels there is a way of comparing the **cost-effectiveness** of different communication channels.

First, list the **possible channels** you are considering for specific audiences (for example, radio, TV, newspaper, meetings, training course). Then, for each channel, make the following estimates:

Steps	
A	Estimate how <b>many audience members</b> your message would reach if you used that channel
B	Estimate how much it would <b>cost</b> to create and deliver a message using that channel. Remember to include your own staff costs
C	Calculate the cost of reaching <b>one person</b> : $C = B/A$
D	Estimate how <b>effective</b> the channel is (think of a one-on-one, face-to-face meeting as 100, so a score of 10 is one-tenth as effective as this)
E	Divide the effectiveness score by the cost of reaching one person: $E = D/C$ . This is the <b>cost-effectiveness score</b> for that channel

The higher the cost-effectiveness score, the more attractive the channel is.

The results of this calculation depend very much on the estimates of audience size, cost and effectiveness that you put in. Try to be as realistic as possible.





## Estimating the cost-effectiveness of different channels

### Example

Steps		Training course	Radio
A	Estimate how <b>many audience members</b> your message would reach if you use that channel	20 people	500,000 people
B	Estimate how much it would <b>cost</b> to create and deliver a message using that channel. Remember to include your own staff costs	Training course delivery: \$1,000	Programme production: \$5,000 Broadcast fee: \$5,000 Total: \$10,000
C	Calculate the cost of reaching <b>one person</b> : $C = B/A$	$\$1,000 / 20 = \$50$ per person	$\$10,000 / 500,000 = \$0.02$ per person
D	Estimate how <b>effective</b> the channel is (think of a one-on-one, face-to-face meeting as 100, so a score of 10 is one-tenth as effective as this)	80	1
E	Divide the effectiveness score by the cost of reaching one person: $E = D/C$ . This is the <b>cost-effectiveness score</b> for that channel	$80 / \$50 = 1.6$	$1 / \$0.02 = 50$

In this case a training course has a score of 1.6, while radio scores 50, so it is better to invest in radio.

Once you have identified the most cost-effective way to reach your audience, it is unwise to spend the entire communication budget on designing and producing content for the chosen channel. Some communication funds should be used to monitor and evaluate the communication campaign to make sure it is effective.

## Repetition and combining channels

Channels are not perfect substitutes for each other. A radio programme, for example, cannot impart the same skills as a well-conducted training course. If one channel does not reach an audience, perhaps a different one will.

It is better to **use a mix of several channels** rather than putting all the resources into a single one. Different channels reinforce each other. Copy ideas from advertising: it uses several different channels (TV advertisements, radio, magazines, billboards, labels on the product itself) in order to reach potential customers.

Repeating messages, perhaps in slightly different ways, is one way to get your audience to remember them. It may not be enough to transmit your message just once. People may not notice it the first time. Even if they notice it, they may not think it is important, or they may not remember it.

## Deciding how to get your messages to your audience

When selecting your channels, make sure you are realistic about:

### ► time

Some messages can be produced very quickly (an update to a website or a live interview goes out immediately), but some require months of preparation (setting up a crop-demonstration plot, publishing a book, holding a training course).

Do you have the time needed? Can the message wait that long? Make sure that you allow enough time for the inevitable delays in production.

### ► equipment and skills

Producing some types of information materials (such as a broadcast-quality video) takes specialist equipment or skills. Do you have the right staff or equipment? Can you hire an outsider to take on the task?

### ► funds

Make sure you have the funds to pay not only for production, but also for distribution. If you make a video, will you have to pay the TV station to broadcast it? Will you have to pay people to attend a training course?

### ► distribution system

Make sure that you can get your message to the audience. If you produce printed materials, how are you going to distribute them? Do you have a list of addresses? Will your radio programme be broadcast at the right time of day when your audience is listening? How can you persuade people to put up the posters you give them?

## Summary

There are many ways of classifying **communication channels**. One of them is based on the size of the audience they can serve: large, medium-sized and small audiences.

In general, channels with **large audiences** tend to be cheaper per person reached and are good for raising awareness.

Channels with **smaller audiences** are more expensive per person reached, but they tend to be more effective in addressing specific audiences and changing their attitudes and behaviour.

The **choice** of the communication channels should be based on the audience, the **message** that you want to convey, and the **cost-effectiveness** of the channel.

**Repeating** your message and **using a mix** of several communication channels can help your message actually reach your audience.

By defining the channels for presenting your information, you have completed the fourth stage in the process of designing a communication strategy.

## Annex I: Communication channels classified by audiences

There are many ways of classifying communication channels. Here is one.  
Note that the categories overlap: some channels fall into more than one category.

Channels	Examples	Characteristics
<b>Large audiences</b>		
Mass media	Radio TV Newspapers Magazines Music Cinema Drama	Can reach very large audiences but tend to have low effectiveness. Audiences tend to be mainly in urban areas, not the poorest people. Short-lived (e.g. risk of listeners missing a radio programme). Professionally managed by journalists and editors – so your project does not control what appears. Need to prepare information in a form that mass media can use. Can be expensive to produce (e.g. a professional-looking video for TV broadcast). Radio, TV, music, cinema and drama: good for reaching illiterate audiences and those with minimal education.
Print	Books Brochures Pamphlets Calendars Diaries Newsletters Information sheets	Can be produced by the project alone. Fairly long-lived (people can store them to read later). Depend on literacy. Distribution to the audience can be a problem. Can reach fewer people than mass media. Do not allow interaction with the audience.
Outdoor	Banners Billboards Signboards Roadside advertisements Loudspeakers	High visibility, good for raising awareness. Can carry only a small amount of information (e.g. a slogan). Limited lifespan.

### Medium-sized audiences

Electronic	Computers Internet CD-ROMs Email Chatting Social networking media Telephones SMS	Audience can be very dispersed – all over the world Wide variety of possibilities, developing very quickly Audience limited by access to computers and skills Can support other media (eg, putting reports online) Can allow interactivity. Mobile phones becoming very widespread, even in rural areas.
Small media	Photos Notice boards Certificates Displays, exhibits Flip charts Logos T-shirts, hats Badges, buttons	Easy to combine with group channels (eg, use a flip chart during a training session). Can carry only a small amount of information (eg, a slogan or announcement).

### Small audiences

Group	Training Meetings Field visits Demonstrations Participatory appraisal Drama, street theatre Speeches, sermons Video Presentations	Effective, especially for practical demonstrations Allow audience feedback (people can ask questions and comment). Stimulate discussion among audience members Tend to be expensive (may need to pay for facilities and accommodation). Require expert staff to present and answer questions.
One-on-one	Letters Memos Meetings (formal, informal) Phone calls Email	Can be very effective. Very small audiences. Possible to personalize to suit individual audience members. Very time-consuming. Allow audience feedback and discussion.

## Annex II: Web2 and social media

### Introduction

The Web offers new ways to interact with other people online and publish information with free, easy to use tools. **Web 2.0** is a term that people loosely apply to these web-based tools, which are often called “**social media**”.

Social media allow organizations and communities to maintain small group communications even when they are geographically distributed.

They can also give you potential access to a massive, international audience.

### Tools for publishing content

Social media tools include tools that make it easy to publish content which can be delivered to your audience in a variety of formats (via web browser, as e-mail messages, mobile text messaging, and even audio files for radio broadcasting).

- E-newsletters allows you to send e-mail regularly to a group of subscribers.
- Blogging tools are some of the most accessible and easiest to use of these tools. They allow you to have visibility and a presence on the web.
- Microblogging allows you to post immediate and short messages to a group of subscribers.
- Podcasts allow you to distribute content in form of easy-to-produce audio files.
- Feeds provide your subscribers with up to date content the moment you post it on the web.

### E-newsletters

A useful alternative to newsletters, newspapers and other printed materials that get issued on regular basis are e-newsletters or e-bulletins.

E-newsletters are e-mail messages that:

- provide information focused on a specific topic; and
- are sent to all addresses on a subscriber list.

People with an interest in the topic can subscribe to an e-newsletter and automatically receive it whenever it is sent out.

E-newsletters can also be used to promote and support content that you are publishing online.

## Blogs

A blog or weblog is an easily created web page usually made up of postings of text, images or multimedia posted in chronological order with the newest content at the top of the page.

Blogs were originally created as public online “journals” since they can be frequently updated and are intended for general public consumption.

Soon not only individuals but also groups and organizations were also publishing blogs as a periodical outlet for their news and information.

Some commonly used blogging services include Blogger and Wordpress. According to WordPress.com, most blogs contain the following elements:

- a main content area with articles listed chronologically, newest on top (often, the articles are organized into categories);
- an archive of older articles;
- a way for people to leave comments about the articles;
- a list of links to other related sites, sometimes called a “blogroll”;
- one or more feeds such as RSS, Atom or RDF files.

## Microblogs

**Microblogging** is a more recent form of blogging that allows the user to post short text updates via web browser, instant message, e-mail or mobile text messaging.

These short updates let others know of your “status” at the time. So instead of a more formal posting, you post a stream of short messages over the course of a day or week.

Twitter is a very popular micro-blogging service. It is a website which enables its users to send and read other users’ messages called tweets. Tweets are text-based posts displayed on the user’s profile page. Users may subscribe to other users’ tweets - this is known as following and subscribers are known as followers.

Services such as Tweet Deck allow you to connect with your contacts across different services such as Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn and more, so that you can update your status and post messages in all these services simultaneously. They also allow you to find communication of others in your area of interest.

### Podcasts

Podcasts are audio files (such as MP3 or .wav formatted) which can be downloaded to a compatible digital audio player or a computer.

Podcasting is an affordable way to produce audio content, almost as a “new generation” radio show. Audio can bridge literacy gaps, and the relatively small file sizes are easier in low bandwidth situations than video files.

The digital content can also be broadcast via community radio where there is no internet connectivity, making this a **good medium to bridge online and offline audiences**.

### Feeds

Most web 2.0 and social networking services give their users the ability to subscribe to their content by **RSS or XML feeds**.

Instead of constantly visiting a website to check for updates, users can subscribe to a content feed and get the new content delivered to their computer **at the time of publication**.

Feeds can be used to:

- provide your subscribers with up to date content the moment you post it on the web;
- exchange information and news with other websites and services, and keep your site always up to date;
- increase the number of channels for your content that can be now seen not only on your website but by email and mobile devices.



## DESIGNING YOUR COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

- 1.1 Identify and analyse your audiences
- 1.2 Define your communication objectives and messages
- 1.3 Select the best channels for presenting your information
- 1.4 Plan and evaluate your communication activities

## Learning objectives

At the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- combine the elements into a communication strategy;
- identify the elements of an annual workplan based on the communication strategy; and
- identify ways to evaluate your communication activities.

## Introduction

To design a communication strategy for a project promoting food security, it is necessary to identify and analyse your **audiences**, decide on **objectives** and **messages** and choose which communication **channels** to use.

All these elements should be converted into a **full communication strategy**.

Steps in designing a communication strategy:

- Identify and analyse your audiences
- Define your communication objectives
- Decide on the messages to convey to your audiences
- Select the channels to use

➤ Create a communication workplan

➤ Evaluate your communication activities

This lesson looks at the last two elements: **Create a communication workplan** and **Evaluate your communication activities**.

## Creating your communication strategy

A **full communication strategy** will:

- identify and prioritize your audiences;
- state your objectives for communicating with each audience;
- define the messages you wish to convey to them; then
- say which channels you will use to reach them.

**Example: set of decisions about a communication strategy**

<b>Channels</b>	We will do a series of radio programmes
<b>Objectives</b>	We will focus on helping pastoralists plan for drought
<b>Workplan</b>	We will hire a radio production specialist to help us produce the programmes
<b>Strategy</b>	We will back up the radio programmes with advice from field staff
<b>Audience</b>	We need to reach pastoralists and livestock traders
<b>Messages</b>	We will try to persuade people to sell their livestock before the drought

It's a good idea to **write down your communication strategy**, even if you work in a very small organization. That way you have a document that your boss can sign off on (and give you a budget for!). You also have a document to refer to periodically. Much communication work consists of "putting out fires" – responding to urgent needs. If you do not have a written strategy, it can be easy to forget the non-urgent (but perhaps more important) activities.

A communication strategy does not have to be a detailed document. Depending on the nature of your project, 10–30 pages are probably enough.

## Creating an annual workplan

You can now turn your strategy into a **work plan** for the **first year**.

The work plan should specify these items:

➤ **The channels you will use for each audience**

For example: Press releases, video, annual report, newsletter, website...

➤ **The number of outputs planned for the year**

How many press releases, how many videos...

➤ **A calendar of activities**

When each output should be ready, and a timetable for producing each item

➤ **Who is responsible for producing each item**

Existing staff, part-timers, or contractors

► **The budget**

How much money is available for each item

It is necessary to be sure there is enough leeway in the plan to allow for the delays, crises and extra work that always occur. It's a good idea to keep 10% of the budget and time in reserve for such items. Be sure to get your boss's approval for the plan.

## Evaluating your strategy

**Evaluating your communication activities** is a very important step in the overall communication process.

Your evaluation should be based on the achievement of the communication objectives you defined earlier. You will need to work out **indicators** for these objectives, as well as finding ways to measure them.

Here are some suggestions:

- number of people attending training courses;
- number of people subscribing to an SMS service (the phone company should be able to tell you this);
- number of visitors to a website or field day; and
- number of cattle sold (the market administration should keep records).

Ask your project's monitoring and evaluation officer to help evaluate the communication activities. You may be able to build communication into the project's overall monitoring and evaluation effort.

If you target the **mass media**, you should keep track of how often your project and its work are mentioned.

These are some ways of keeping track:

- Subscribe to the main newspapers in your area and keep a file of clippings.
- Ask other people to send clippings to you that mention your project or the area you are working in.
- Ask journalists who interview project staff to send you copies of their stories.
- Ask radio and TV reporters to tell you when a programme is being broadcast. Make a recording if possible.
- Subscribe to a web alert service so you know which websites link to yours.

This monitoring may alert you to the need to take urgent action. For example, if a negative news story appears about your project, you may need to respond to it.

### How to find out which websites link to your website

Type your website address into a **search engine** such as:

- Google, [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)
- Bing, [www.bing.com](http://www.bing.com)
- Yahoo, [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com)

**Check incoming links** using one of these services:

- Google Alerts [www.google.com/alerts/](http://www.google.com/alerts/)
- Yahoo Site Explorer, <http://siteexplorer.search.yahoo.com/>
- Backlinkwatch, <http://www.backlinkwatch.com/>

If you have a **blog**, enable the **backlinks** setting.

Audience members (and people who are not in your main audiences) may give you **feedback about the project**.

- If you produce a newsletter, encourage readers to write to you, and consider including a feedback form.
- Make sure visitors to the project website can contact you via a feedback form, by leaving comments on the site, or via email.
- Keep a record of letters and emails you receive in response to communication activities.
- Keep notes of informal feedback you receive from audience members. Ask your colleagues to tell you about feedback they receive.

You may decide you need to do an **audience survey** to get the information you need. This can be done formally or informally.

**Informal Survey:**

- Go out **periodically** and meet members of your audience.
- Find out whether they have received information from the project, and if so, what they did as a result.
- See if you can spot evidence that they have received and used your information.

**Formal Survey:**

- Consider doing a formal survey of an audience's knowledge, attitudes and practice.
- Decide whether a formal **questionnaire** is appropriate, or whether a **participatory appraisal** or series of **focus groups** would be better.

## Using monitoring and evaluation data

Once you have collected your data, you need to **analyse** it to see:

- if your messages reached the audience;
- if the messages resulted in changes in knowledge, attitudes or behaviour; and
- what changes are needed to increase the effectiveness of the communication effort.

Then you can revise your communication work plan – and perhaps your strategy.

## Summary

A **full communication strategy** will identify and prioritize your audiences, state your objectives for communicating with each audience, define the messages you wish to convey to them, then say which channels you will use to reach them.

It's a good idea to write down your communication strategy, before turning it into a **work plan** for the **first year**.

**Evaluating your communication activities** is a very important step in the overall communication process.

Once you have collected your data, you need to **analyse** it to see if you have achieved the communication objectives you defined earlier. This will help you to understand what changes are needed to increase the effectiveness of the communication effort.

By analyzing the data you have collected and, eventually, by revising your communication work plan, you have completed the process of designing a communication strategy.

## Annex I: Outline of a Communication Strategy

### Northeastern Province Food Security Project

Sample of text	Comments
<p><b>Introduction</b></p> <p>The Northeastern Food Security Project aims at improving the food security of 100,000 pastoralists in the drought-prone Northeastern Province. It does this by promoting the sale of cattle by pastoralists during periods of normal rainfall so they have income that can carry them over the drought.</p> <p>The project needs to develop strong communication linkages with pastoralists and with individuals and organizations that support them.</p>	<p>The Introduction should give the <b>background</b> and a summary of the <b>project objectives</b> and <b>strategy</b>. It should show why a communication strategy is necessary and how it can help the project achieve its goals.</p>
<p><b>Major audiences</b></p> <p>The Project has five main audiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pastoralists</li> <li>• Livestock traders</li> <li>• Extension workers, other projects and organizations working on food security in the province</li> <li>• Donors</li> <li>• Policymakers</li> </ul> <p>We will deal with each of these audiences in turn.</p>	<p>This section should list each of the main audiences you have identified.</p>
<p><b>Pastoralists</b></p> <p>The 100,000 <b>pastoralists</b> in the province are scattered over an area of 50,000 km<sup>2</sup>. They keep herds of camels, cattle, sheep and goats, and are highly mobile. Many are illiterate...</p>	<p>For the first audience, give the information you have gathered about their <b>characteristics</b>: their number, location, educational levels, language, background, organizational affiliations, livelihood and employment, and existing knowledge about your subject.</p>
<p>The pastoralists try to maintain large herds as a store of wealth. They are often reluctant to sell their animals during periods of good rainfall when prices are good; during a drought, animals become weak and prices fall as large numbers come into the market.</p> <p>They currently have few sources of information other than contacts with other pastoralists (often at watering points or markets) and traders. Some have radios and mobile phones. Their main information needs are current livestock prices, the location of trading opportunities, and the availability of veterinary treatments.</p>	<p>Then describe their current <b>attitudes</b> and <b>practice</b>, their <b>information sources</b> and <b>needs</b>.</p>

<p>The project aims at:</p> <p><b>Knowledge:</b> Teaching 5,000 pastoralists in the Northeastern Province by December 2012 how to get the latest cattle prices via mobile phones.</p> <p><b>Attitudes:</b> Persuading 1,000 pastoralists that they would be better off selling healthy cattle when prices are good, rather than waiting until a drought.</p> <p><b>Practice:</b> Increasing the number of healthy cattle sold during periods of normal rainfall by 10,000 a year by December 2012.</p>	<p>Then describe your communication <b>objectives</b> (in terms of knowledge, attitudes and practice) for this audience.</p>
<p>Key messages include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send an SMS to 0123 456789 to get the latest cattle prices</li> <li>• A weak animal is not worth anything</li> <li>• A good animal means good money</li> <li>• You can earn ten times more by selling a few weeks earlier</li> <li>• Sell a few animals each month to pay for school fees</li> </ul>	<p>List the <b>messages</b> that you hope to deliver.</p>
<p>The project will use a combination of short radio broadcasts, supported by informal communication via extension staff and traders, and simple brochures in the local language.</p>	<p>Describe the communication <b>channels</b> you plan to use.</p>
<p>Livestock traders...                  Extension workers, other projects and organizations...                  Donors...                  Policymakers...</p>	<p>Then go on to each of the other audiences and describe a similar set of information.</p>
<p><b>Workplan</b></p> <p><b>February–January:</b> 5-minute weekly <b>radio broadcasts</b> with a combination of price and weather information, along with persuasive messages about livestock sales:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 52 broadcasts x \$200 = \$10,400</li> </ul> <p><b>January–February:</b> Training for extension workers and staff from other organizations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 courses x \$10,000 = \$30,000</li> </ul> <p><b>February:</b> Brochures about SMS market information service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5,000 copies x \$0.10 = \$500</li> </ul>	<p>Finally, outline your communication workplan and budget.</p>



## Annex II: Elements of a Communication Strategy

Characteristic	Question	Analysis
Name of audience: .....		
<b>Audience analysis</b>		
<b>Number</b>	How many people (or organizations) are there?	
<b>Location</b>	Where are they located?	
<b>Education</b>	What type of education do they have? In what subjects?	
<b>Language</b>	What languages do they speak?	
<b>Background</b>	Where do they come from? What are they like?	
<b>Organization</b>	Do they belong to an organization?	
<b>Livelihood and employment</b>	How do they earn a living? What type of work do they do? What are their job responsibilities?	
<b>Existing knowledge</b>	What do they know about food security?	
<b>Existing attitudes</b>	What do they think about it?	
<b>Current practice</b>	What do they do about it?	
<b>Information sources</b>	Where do they currently get information? What media do they use?	
<b>Information needs</b>	What types of information do they need?	
<b>Objectives, messages, channels analysis</b>		
<b>Objectives</b>	What do you want them to do?	
<b>Messages</b>	What you want to tell them?	
<b>Communication channels</b>	How best to communicate with them?	