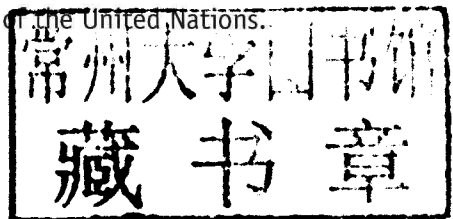# Food Security
Communications Toolkit

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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
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Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations
Rome, 2011

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Acknowledgements

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 Identify and analyse your audiences **1**.1

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