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**SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATIONS, PUBLIC RELATIONS AND
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION**

**Assessment of Communication Strategy of FAO in Light of Van Ruler's Strategic
Communication Frame Work; Case of Reducing Food Losses through Improved Post
Harvest Management in Ethiopia – Phase II**

Betelhem Sisay G/giorgis

**A Thesis submitted to The School of Journalism and Communications in partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in Public Relations and Strategic
Communication (Journalism and Communication)**

June 2020

Addis Ababa

Ethiopia

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RULER’S STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION FRAME WORK; CASE OF REDUCING
FOOD LOSSES THROUGH IMPROVED POST HARVEST MANAGEMENT IN
ETHIOPIA – PHASE II**

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university. I followed research code of conduct throughout the work of this study and all source used for this thesis have been duly acknowledged.

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ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC RELATION AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

This is to certify that the thesis is prepared by Betelhem Sisay G/giorgis entitled “Assessment on Communication Strategy of FAO in Light of Van Ruler’s Strategic Communication Frame Work; Case of Reducing Food Losses through Improved Post Harvest Management in Ethiopia – Phase II” which is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of master public relation and strategic communication. It complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Approved by Board of Examiners

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Abstract

The Purpose of this study is to assess the communication strategy of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) for a specific project running from 2018 to 2022 on Reducing Food Losses through Improved Post Harvest Management project in Ethiopia – Phase II. In this study, a qualitative research method was employed to interpret data. Qualitative data was obtained through document analysis. The content of a project specific communication strategy was analyzed in light of Van Ruler's (2019) Strategic Communication Framework and the main communication strategic elements included in the plan were assessed based on Donald D. Smith's (2002) perspective on Strategic Planning for Public Relations. Purposive sampling methods were also employed to choose the organization and the right communication plan in content. Some of the major findings reveal that, from the eight building blocks; ambition and internal situations appears to be strong while vision, external situation, accountability, resource, stakeholders and approach needs more improvement and revision. Regarding with the communication strategy elements included on the communication strategy, the researcher concluded that it needs revision and more work in order to draw an accurate picture of the strategy which will lead to an effective implementation and positive outcome. Various recommendations have been suggested for each elements by the researcher including a thorough revision to better improve the strategic communication.

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Table of Content

Contents

Abstract	v
Acknowledgment	vi
Table of Content.....	vii
Acronyms	ix
CHAPTER ONE	1
1. Introduction	1
1.1.1 Organizational Overview	3
1.1.2 Project Summary	4
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	5
1.3 Research objectives	6
1.3.1. General Objective of the Study.....	6
1.3.2 Specific Objectives	6
1.3.3 Research Questions.....	6
1.4 Significance of the study.....	7
1.6 Organization of the Study.....	8
2. Literature Review	9
2.1. Empirical review	9
2.1.1 Strategy	9
2.1.2 Communication Strategy.....	9
2.2 Theoretical Review	13
2.3 Conceptual Framework.....	16
CHAPTER THREE	19
3. Methodology.....	19
3.1 Research design.....	19
3.2 Data source	20
3.3 Sampling Techniques	20

3.4 Method of data analysis.....	20
CHAPTER FOUR	21
4. Data Presentation, Result, Discussion, and Analysis	21
4.1. Result	22
4.2 Discussion and Analysis.....	25
CHAPTER FIVE.....	40
5. Conclusion and Recommendation.....	40
5.1. Conclusion	40
5.2 Recommendation	43
References	45
Appendix I: FAO Communication AND C4D strategy.....	48

Acronyms

FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
PHM	Post-Harvest Management
SBCC	Social and Behavior Change Communication
SFE	Sub-regional Office for Eastern Africa, FAO
UN	United Nations
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
SNNP	Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples
SWOT	Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Treat

CHAPTER ONE

1. Introduction

In today's increasingly complex world, organizations vie for the attention, admiration, affinity, alignment and allegiance of constituents of all sorts. This may include; customers, employees, investors and donors, government officials, special interest group leaders and the public at large. In so doing, organizations make strategic decisions about the level and nature of resources they will devote to such efforts. (Hallahan et al., 2007)

For Van Ruler (2019), strategy means thinking about how to get to a given point and all the things that need to be considered en route. Although, Van Ruler (2018) explained that she considers communication as the constituting pillar of strategic communication, and strategy is the context in which strategic communication takes place. She also stressed that we need a lens through which to view communication that aligns with modern approaches to strategy development, and which can help scholars delineate their research and assist practitioners to actually "do" strategic communication in a theoretically effective way.

Van Ruler (2018) also explained that communication is strategic when it is completely consistent with the organization mission, vision, values and when it is able to enhance the strategic positioning and competitiveness against their competitors. Therefore, in this case, she concluded that, communication is only strategic when it has a certain quality.

According to Michelle Burger (2017), public relations is an integral part of organizational strategic development and implementation. Although strategy is a broad concept, in general it serves as a guide to action. She defined Strategy as "the determination of basic long-term goals of an enterprise and the adoption of courses of action necessary for carrying out those goals". The vision, mission and strategic objectives of an organization encompass its basic long-term goals and guide its decisions as to how the vision, mission and strategic objectives are going to be achieved.

On the other hand Halloran (2007) believes that "strategic communication has its roots in the true and classic meaning of 'propaganda.'" Although persuasion is an attempt to sway the opinions of others in a certain direction, as does influence, the difference lies in the methodology

of getting others to agree. Strategic public relations aim to achieve mutual understanding and benefit, for both the organization and its stakeholders.

The main elements of communication strategy/planning including goal, identify and profile audience, key messages, communication channels and activities were analyzed based on the basic elements of strategic communication development using Donald D. Smith's (2002) perspective on Strategic Planning for Public Relations.

Besides the basic communication strategy elements, for this research, the researcher also focused specifically on Van Ruler (2019) a good strategy development model requirement and its strategic communication elements framework which is the anchor framework of this study. The Communication Strategy Framework is a planning method wholly different to the classic step-by-step plan still common in the worlds of public relations and corporate communication. (Van Ruler, 2019)

Thus, this study assessed the communication strategy of FAO on a project to reduce food losses through improved post-harvest management (PHM) which is running from 2018 to 2022. The plan is designed to foster visibility and raise the public profile of the project in 4 selected regions and woredas in Ethiopia.

1.1.1 Organizational Overview

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has an office in Addis Ababa covering nine countries in Eastern Africa. This Sub-region (East Africa) is home to over 230 million people, many of whom engage in food and agricultural production as smallholder farmers and pastoralists. Despite some economic progress, concerns remain over the deepening of food insecurity and malnutrition across the Sub-region. (FAO, 2018)

FAO's Sub-regional Office for Eastern Africa (SFE) is responsible for developing, promoting, overseeing and implementing agreed strategies and projects in the area of food security, nutrition, agriculture and rural development priorities at national and sub-regional levels.

SFE provides technical support to the nine country offices and is directly responsible for implementing sub-regional projects covering several countries. (FAO, 2018)

According to FAO (2018), the recent FAO and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) report indicated that undernourishment in Africa affects more than 257 million people, over 132 million of whom are living in the Eastern Africa Subregion. Similarly, the prevalence of severe food insecurity is on the rise in the Sub-region, with over 31 percent of the total population is affected.

Agriculture production therefore continues to be an important sector and the government of Ethiopia is putting a lot of effort to produce enough food to feed the growing population. The fact that Ethiopia has a total area of 1.127 million km², with a potentially arable land of 51.3 million hectares but currently only about 10.1% of the land is cultivated emphasizes the need to develop agriculture in the country (FAO, 2018).

This study focuses on a project on Reducing Food Losses through Improved PHM in Ethiopia – Phase II. The interventions target maize, wheat, sorghum, haricot beans, fava beans and chickpea and is being implemented in four major grain-growing regions of Ethiopia; Amhara, Oromia, Tigray and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples (SNNP) in 14 target woredas.

1.1.2 Project Summary

The communication strategy of FAO Ethiopia is intended to foster visibility and raise the public profile of the Reducing Food Losses through Improved Post Harvest Management (PHM) Project in Ethiopia – Phase II.

This communication strategy has thirteen pages including project overview, planning and assessment, objectives, communication channel and tactics as well as key messages.

According to FAO (2018), the Federal Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) implement the PHM Project, funded by the Swiss Confederation, and technically supported by FAO. FAO is the executing agency and responsible for project implementation in accordance with standard agreements between FAO, the Donor and the government of Ethiopia. It is being implemented in Amhara, Oromia, and Tigray and SNNP Regional States.

The duration of this project is from June 2018 to July 2022 while serving as a mobilizing means of available resources to achieve project goals and objectives.

According to FAOSFE (2018), the stakeholders for this project include individuals and organizations engaged in the grain production, post-harvest handling including harvesting, drying, transportation, storage, marketing process and value addition of grains as well as policy-makers and regulators overseeing each link between the producers and the consumers in Ethiopia.

The main direct beneficiaries are both male and female smallholder farmers, and their organizations who are involved in the grain production, cooperative union, artisans, and marketing service providers. The other category of direct beneficiaries are artisans who have sufficient experience in metal and tin smiths work especially running their own workshops as their primary occupation and Micro Finance Institutions. (FAO, 2018)

On the other hand, the private sector enterprises, input dealers, traders, transporters, business service providers, microfinance institutions, etc. that are food chain participants and services providers are indirect beneficiaries of this project. (FAO, 2018)

1.2 Statement of the Problem

According to Argenti et al. (2005), many companies take a tactical, short-term approach to communicating with key constituencies, which is not only non-strategic but may be inconsistent with the corporate strategy or even impede it. Companies that continue to take a tactical, short term approach to communicating with key constituencies will find it increasingly difficult to compete.

The researcher believes that developing an integrated, strategic approach to communications is extremely critical to success while it helps to realize the organization's goals and objectives to achieve the intended goals. Hence, this research tried finding the strength and weakness of FAO Ethiopia's communication strategy developed for PHM project in light of Van Ruler (2019) good strategy development model requirements and its strategic communication elements frameworks.

Moreover, when developing a good communication strategy, public relations practitioners have to make sure it included all the necessary core elements in a communication strategy. Therefore, core communication strategy elements included in the communication strategy under study was assessed based on communication strategy principles explained in the literature.

Furthermore, over the years, a number of communication scholars did studies and investigation on strategic communication. From what can be observed from the literature and as far as the researcher is concerned, no study is being/was conducted in relation to assessing the communication strategy/ plan of the organization so far.

Thus, the researcher believes that conducting this study in the area of communication strategy will fill gaps in the literature and serves as an input for other researchers to further their studies on the area.

1.3 Research objectives

1.3.1. General Objective of the Study

The general objective of this study is to assess the communication strategy of FAO in light of Van Ruler's Strategic Communication Frame Work; Case of Reducing Food Losses through Improved Post Harvest Management project in Ethiopia – Phase II.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

Specific objectives of this study are;

- To assess the strength and weakness of FAO's communication strategy based on Van Ruler's (2019) good strategy development model requirements and its strategic communication elements framework.
- To assess the core communication strategy elements included on the communication strategy.
- To recommend possible ways to improve the existing communication strategy.

1.3.3 Research Questions

The study attempts to address the following questions:

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the communication strategy according to Van Ruler's (2019) good strategy development model requirements and its strategic communication elements framework?
- What are the main communications strategy planning elements included on the communication strategy?

1.4 Significance of the study

The researcher believes much is left to work on for the development of Public Relations in Ethiopia. Thus, the study will be significant for PR practitioners striving to find new perspectives in the field as well as develop and revise their communication strategies to help their organizations to mobilize its resources available to achieve its goals and effectively implementing the intended mission, goal and ambition.

The study will also benefit policy makers to amend possible policies and laws in realizing of the importance of developing quality and efficient communication strategies/strategic plan to help organizations position themselves in the minds of their publics and creating an open communication system.

The study is significant in a way that helps FAO's public relations practitioners to identify the gaps and carefully revise their project specific communication plan.

Finally, the study will be significant in the way that it encourages other interested researchers to carry out studies in the areas of strategic communication and fill a gap in the literature. Therefore, conducting this study in the area will help other researchers as an input to further their studies on the area.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is on the assessment of a communication strategy of FAO in Light of Van Ruler's Strategic Communication Frame Work; Case of Reducing Food Losses through Improved Post Harvest Management project in Ethiopia – Phase II.

Even though, strategic communication is a vast area of study, this research is only focused on communication strategy/plan and tried to assess a project specific communication strategy by FAO Ethiopia.

Therefore, the selected communication strategy is a 4-year communication plan for a specific project on reducing food losses through improved post-harvest management in Ethiopia. According to FAO, this communication strategy is intended to foster visibility and raise the public profile of a specific project.

1.6 Limitation of the Study

This research is only limited to assessing the communication strategy of FAO Ethiopia based on Van Ruler's (2019) good communication strategic framework which makes this study very narrow regarding with using a specific academic model.

Given the complexity of FAO's organizational structure as an international organization, the researcher experienced lack of sample population which limits this thesis to only study one communication strategy of a project specific plan.

Finally, the researcher experienced some limitations including inability to gather sufficient information due to partial lockdown of the country caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.6 Organization of the Study

The study is organized into five chapters. The first chapter is an introductory part of the thesis including introduction, statement of the problem, objectives, research questions, and significance as well as scope and limitations of the study.

Chapter two presented literature review of theoretical, conceptual and empirical literatures. Theories and models on strategic communication/communication strategy are explained in this chapter. Additionally, related research in the field of strategic communication and communication plan were used to elaborate the main topic of this study.

Chapter three provided an elaboration on methodological aspects, procedures, techniques and data analysis.

Chapter four dealt with data presentation and analysis of the study based on the theoretical and conceptual foundation explained in chapter two.

Finally, chapter five is devoted to summarizing the findings, drawing conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

2. Literature Review

2.1. Empirical review

2.1.1 Strategy

Michelle Burger (2017) explains that strategy is “a pattern of purposes, policies, programs, actions, decisions or resource allocations that define what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it.” The organization’s mission is only able to contribute to the organization if it is considered as an integral part of all organizational functions. She believed that strategy is “the determination of basic long-term goals of an enterprise and the adoption of courses of action necessary for carrying out those goals.”

Michelle Burger (2017, p. 25.) summarized the attributes of strategy as follows:

- Strategy involves tactics to reach an overall goal
- Strategy is a planned process
- Strategy gives an organization its reason for existing (vision and mission)
- Strategy encompasses the organization’s strategic objectives
- Strategy requires both planning (development of strategy) and implementation (carrying out the strategy that was developed)

2.1.2 Communication Strategy

According to social and behavior change communication (SBCC) program (2009), a communication strategy guides an entire program or intervention. It sets the tone and direction so that all communication activities, products and materials work in harmony to achieve the desired change. Strategic activities and materials are more likely to promote change. A communication strategy also enables stakeholders and partners to provide input and agree upon the best way forward so that actions are unified. With an agreed-upon communication strategy, staff and partners have a map they can refer to through the various program development stages.

Establishing a good communication strategy significantly improves the probability of success on a program. Every day, people are inundated with a substantial amount of data and must determine and prioritize what to pay attention to and when. Communication across different time zones for global teams is a challenge and demands focused attention and effort. A communication strategy allows us to better structure and control information flow, removes uncertainty, and eliminates unnecessary churn in the program. A good strategy outlines the message, the target audience to address, the communication channels, the resources required, and the feedback methods to measure results of the exercise. (Abramo, L. & Onitiri, R., 2010)

Figure 1: components of a communication strategy



Source:- Abramo, L. & Onitiri, R., 2010

Abramo, L. & Onitiri, R. (2010, p. 72.) stated that “The idea that a strategy can be brilliant and it’s execution poor is simply wrong.” So, it is very important to plan the communication strategy very carefully because it will determine how effectively the program communications flow will function.

Ronald D. Smith (2002) explained steps that are grouped into four phases both descriptive and accurate. This model is called the Nine Steps of Strategic Public Relations.

Phase one is about Formative Research while it consists of three steps namely; Analyzing the Situation Step, Analyzing the Organization and Analyzing the Publics.

Phase Two is Strategy which consists of three more steps; Establishing Goals and Objectives, Formulating Action and Response Strategies and Using Effective Communication.

Phase Three is all about Tactics with the steps of Choosing Communication Tactics and Implementing the Strategic Plan.

The final Phase is dedicated for Evaluative Research with a step of Evaluating the Strategic Plan.

Meanwhile, ResultsMap (2013, p. 3) introduced five principles for good communication strategy/planning.

1. Communications should be designed to deliver a measurable result. Investments of resources (human or financial) in communications activities should be subject to transparency and accountability for delivering an observable, measurable result.
2. Effective communications does not happen by accident. The key to effective communications is planning. Though communications often has an important function to play in being in a responsive or reactive posture, proactive communication generates more impact at less cost and less risk to the extent that it is planned.
3. Communications should be focused on results, rather than activity. Often, communicators are in the business of generating stuff – speeches, media releases and promotional materials. The communications function is much more effective when it is driven to generate results, such as increased rates of awareness, product sales, improved stakeholder relationships or strengthened internal alignment. The tactics are important, but they are fundamentally secondary to the primary alignment of the communications function toward solid outcomes.
4. Communications is a support function. It's important not to communicate for the sake of communicating. To be strategic, communications must by definition be aligned to support and propel the organization's mandate and objectives.
5. Plan communications from the inside out. Communications planning should always include consideration of employees as a key audience – staff can greatly contribute to communications efforts, excluding them from communications activities can be erosive to internal engagement and trust. When planning communications, consider the concept

of starting from the inside, then moving out to stakeholders, such as the Board of Directors and other key stakeholders as priority audiences, even if ultimately a communications activity is directed toward an external audience base.

2.2 Theoretical Review

Betteke Van Ruler introduced a new perspective for a good strategy development model requirement and its strategic communication elements framework in 2019.

According to Van Ruler, this model consists of eight interdependent building blocks which demonstrate how developing a strategy is like working on a jigsaw puzzle. Van Ruler also emphasizes that the order of these eight blocks doesn't bring any change as long as choices made in one building block are consistent with choices made in other blocks.

Figure 2: Betteke Van Ruler's Strategic Communication Frame



Source: Betteke Van Ruler, The Strategic Communication Frame, 2016

According to Van Ruler (2016, p. 3.), these eight building blocks cannot substitute each other rather they are corresponding to one another in designing professionally standardized strategic communication. The eight building blocks or elements along their function and importance explained in relation to FAO's project specific communication strategy are as follows:

Ambition: According to Oxford Dictionary, it refers to strong desire to do or achieve something. Van Ruler (2019) highlighted that ambition presents professionals with these question; what are

the basic communication values needed for this specific strategy? and what do you want to achieve?

Vision: Betake Van Ruler (2018) also explains that Communication is strategic when it is completely consistent with the organization mission, vision, values and when it is able to enhance the strategic positioning and competitiveness between their competitors.

Quoting John Naisbitt “Strategic planning is worthless, unless there is first a strategic vision” Van Ruler stresses that ambition is influenced by a person’s own perception of his/her profession and its added value.

Internal Situation: For Van Ruler (2019), it is impossible to define and value the importance to us of phenomena in the outside world unless you know what is happening inside the organization. Therefore, it is important to consider what is going on in the organization, what are the strategic decision in the board, and in other management fields, the style of the house-how do we communicate with each other and how do we encounter the outside world.

External Situation: As Van Ruler (2019) articulated it, it is typical for communication professionals to be aware of the external situation, of what is going on in the outside world and of public opinions, although we prefer to talk about social moods these days. It is important to consider relevant trends and developments in society, and relevant issues and social around these.

Accountability: according to Oxford Dictionary, accountability plainly means the fact or condition of being accountable; responsibility. Van Ruler (2019) on her part explains accountability as a force that makes clear identify what exact responsibilities are regarding the set ambitions and how one can measure progress.

Stakeholders: Betteke (2019) defined stakeholders as groups or persons who have a stake in our ambition as well as the target groups to reach with our communications.

Resources: For Van Ruler (2019), resource is about being equipped to do the job. It is about budget, budget allocation and about competences. It considers what competences do you need to realize your ambition, and how much budget is required including operational and managerial. It is about to make wise decisions that is strategic decisions.

Approach: Approach is about translating all strategic decisions done in former building blocks into operational activities. All decisions in the former buildings block, need to come together in the approach. It considers goals with which constituency and how, and which activities should have top priority.

In conclusion; The Strategic Communication Frame is basically a balancing act of a realistic but limited set of questions and challenging answers that, when executed conscientiously, delivers a comprehensive but nevertheless crystal clear strategy at a glance (a one-pager). By putting superfluous details aside and concentrating on the essentials, the model has easily proven to be an instant eye-opener for clients and other stakeholders (Van Ruler, 2019).

This framework will be used to assess the communication strategy under study to check if it go in line with the organization's mission, vision and all the eight building blocks introduced by Van Ruler.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

Michelle Burger (2017) highlighted that Grunig and Hunt's (1984) Press Agency and Public Information Model are primarily concerned with the dissemination of information and do not engage in dialogue with stakeholders. The Press Agency Model's purpose is to persuade and it is one-way, mono-logical communication, which no intent to create dialogue between an organization and its stakeholders. Until recently organizational communication was predominantly one way and mono-logical as public relations practitioners were concerned with obtaining media attention in the form of publicity for their organization without the expectation of feedback. The Press Agency model is propaganda when it is used to spread 'incomplete, distorted or half-true information'.

Van ruler (2018), argues that although the one-way approach might be convincing in relation to information giving and persuasive communication, more recent approaches to the concept of communication view it as a fundamental two-way process that is interactive by nature and participatory at all levels.

On the other hand, Van Ruler's (2004) Information Model, together with Grunig and Hunts's (1984) Public Information Model, is one-way communication which makes use of mainstream or local media to spread accurate and generally positive information about the organization but, has no expectations of feedback. These models are used to provide relevant information to generate understanding and awareness.

According to Michelle Burger (2017), Grunig and Hunt's (1984) Two-Way Models are attributed to be the function of management and technician public relations practitioners. The Two-Way Asymmetric Model aims to change attitude and behavior in favor of the organization and is criticized for being one-way and manipulative (Van Ruler, 2004) as this model is used to construct organizational messages and does not encourage dialogue, but uses monitoring and measurement to adjust the message to persuade the public.

Similarly, Van Ruler's (2004) Persuasion Model is a strategy to present the organization with a favorable bias to further develop relationships with stakeholders. However, if a small element of persuasion is involved, it is done within the Two-Way Symmetrical approach that suggests a beneficial outcome for all parties.

Van Ruler's (2004) consensus building model is a strategy to build bridges between the organization and its environment or employees.

The dialogue strategy proposed by Van Ruler (2004) is a facilitation strategy and is effective in identifying problems and consulting to collect possible solutions from stakeholders as well as to develop corporate policies interactively in a socially responsible manner. It is used to engage with stakeholder groups and collaborate in decision-making (Van Ruler, 2004).

Van Ruler's model also is an agile model which enables organizations to be flexible to changes in their surrounding and helps them adjust themselves with the changing environment. The agile communication professional therefore has a justifiable reason to take advantage of emerging opportunities and to reduce the risks, 24/7.

The agile organization strives to make change a routine part of organizational life to reduce or eliminate the organizational trauma that paralyzes many businesses attempting to adapt to new markets and environments. Because change is perpetual, they claim, the agile enterprise is able to nimbly adjust to and take advantage of emerging opportunities. Agile stands for flexible, smart, fast, and result oriented (Van Ruler, 2019).

Betteke van Ruler and Frank Körver (2016, p. 11.) identified the following four starting points of agile strategy development.

1. **People over processes:** Forming a group of skilled and motivated people is vital. In fact, van ruler and Frank Korver strongly believe that people trump process.
2. **Respond to change rather than follow a plan:** for these scholars, it is a waste of time to put effort into every tiny detail. Vision and ambition are vital, but more operational choices need to be challenged over and over again. Plans should never be too detailed and only oriented at the most important decisions made.
3. **Cross functional collaboration rather than silo behavior:** The majority of communication and reputational challenges we are facing nowadays require intensive collaboration.

Developing strategies in splendid isolation is a no-go. Strategy development requires cross functional collaboration.

4. **One-page over a bulky report:** No professional should be tortured by reading bulky plans. And no professional should be given the thankless task of writing those documents. Management simply won't read it. They only care for the vital information: "What are the communications objectives? How are we going to realize these objectives? And what is it going to cost?"

Generally, the agile charged communication function strives to make (unexpected) change a natural fact of organizational life and legitimize professionals to adapt quickly to new markets, environments and challenges (Betteke van Ruler and Frank Körver, 2016).

Therefore, The Communication Strategy Framework is all about reflecting and adjusting. An agile method demands agile professionals. Although not called agile, the idea of reflecting and adjusting as the best way to act is far from new.

CHAPTER THREE

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

The researcher assessed the communication strategy of FAO; the case of Reducing Food Losses through Improved PHM in Ethiopia – Phase II.

In order to analyze the communication strategy from a theoretical perspective, the researcher used Betteke Van Ruler's Strategic communication framework as an academic model of this research. Accordingly, the eight Strategic Communication building blocks and its requirements were assessed, interpreted and analyzed.

To assess the core communication strategy elements included in the strategic communication under study were looked over with Donald D. Smith's (2002) perspective on Strategic Planning for Public Relations. For him, strategic communication is intentional communication undertaken by a business or non-profit organization, sometimes by a less structured group. It has a purpose and a plan, in which alternatives are considered and decisions are justified (ibid).

Betteke Van Ruler (2018) argues that communication is strategic when it is completely consistent with the organization mission, vision, values and when it is able to enhance the strategic positioning and competitiveness between their competitors. Therefore, in this case, she concluded that, communication is only strategic when it has a certain quality.

According to Van Ruler (2019), the communication strategy framework invites communication professionals to explore an alternative method of strategy development: by explicitly considering external alongside internal contexts, by looking at these based on your specific communication vision, and by gauging their relative importance; by intensifying organization's collaboration with key players, both internal and external; by making choice that may be more drastic than usual and so on.

3.2 Data source

To collect data for this study, the researcher used secondary data. The secondary data file is obtained from FAO on communication strategy. Other relevant information was also obtained from various websites, published and unpublished literatures and other sources.

3.3 Sampling Techniques

Purposive sampling method is used to collect the necessary data for this study. Hamed Taherdoost (2016) argued that Purposive or judgmental sampling is a strategy in which particular settings, persons or events are selected deliberately in order to provide important information that cannot be obtained from other choices. It is where the researcher includes cases or participants in the sample because they believe that they warrant inclusion.

Purposive sampling method was employed in choosing the organization which is suitable in case of place. This sampling technique was also employed to choose the right communication plan to make the study manageable and precise.

3.4 Method of data analysis

The study employed qualitative research method to analyze the collected data. Michelle Burger (2017) explicated that a qualitative methodology is textual in nature and uses inductive reasoning to answer the research question. It is subjective as it seeks to understand the world based on how individuals experience it and infers answers from the data through its context. It is mainly about meaning making, interpretation and careful analysis of those data obtained.

Regarding document analysis, the researcher used this method to interpret the collected data. Document analysis involves skimming (superficial examination), reading (thorough examination), and interpretation. According to Glenn Bowen (2009), document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents, both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material. Like other analytical methods in qualitative research, document analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge.

After the data was collected and arranged in a way that is easy to analyze, it was presented according to theoretical foundations explained in chapter two (Literature Review).

CHAPTER FOUR

4. Data Presentation, Result, Discussion, and Analysis

In this chapter the researcher interpreted and analyzed collected data from FAO Ethiopia through document analysis. According to Bowen (2009), document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents, both printed and electronic (computer-based) material.

Therefore, Betteke Van Ruler's new perspective for a good strategy development model requirement and its strategic communication elements framework introduced in 2019 was discussed in detail to assess the strength and weakness of the communication strategy under study in order to draw accurate conclusion and forward professional recommendations. Thus, the researcher interpreted the collected data and analyze respectively under different sub-topics.

Furthermore, core communication strategic elements included on the communication strategy was assessed base on Donald D. Smith's (2002) perspective on Strategic Planning for Public Relations which is explained in chapter two.

In the various editions of his book Strategic Planning for Public Relations, Ronald D. Smith (2002) suggested that the planning process in public relations consists of four phases, with all together nine steps. The first phase is analysis of the situation, the organization, and the public. The second is to draw up a strategic plan, which means establishing goals and objectives, formulating action and response strategies, and developing the message strategy. The third phase is tactics, which means first selecting communication tactics, and then implementing the strategic plan. The fourth phase is evaluation of the plan. This method is also known as RACE: Research, Action plan, Communications, Evaluation.

Meanwhile, Van ruler (2019) argued that in this kind of traditional communication planning of Donald Smith (2002), results and actions are determined beforehand. He advises professionals to set targets and tactics all in advance. Thus, when conditions change along the way, or when the effects of intended actions are prove to be different from what is expected, professionals are forced to admit that their goals were not realistic, that they aimed for the wrong target, and/or that they did not choose the right strategy, the right actions, or the right message.

Finally, the next section will focus on the major findings based on the objectives of the study.

4.1. Result

The strength and weakness of the communication strategy will be briefly discussed in this section along with the assessment of the core communication elements in the communication strategy.

1. Ambition

From Van Ruler's good communication strategy perspective, FAO's ambition for the PHM project appears to be strong because it addresses the basic communication values needed for the specific strategy as well as the organization's desired goal to achieve.

Under ambition, the organization set specific objectives for the PHM project communication and the researcher looked those objectives from four perspectives by Smith (2002) which are; goal oriented, impact oriented, public focused and singular.

The study found out that the communication strategy gives due emphasis on three of the perspectives namely, goal oriented, impact oriented and public focused.

On the other hand, the communication strategy is weak on stating objectives separately for each public in order to make sure that their objectives are measurable and attainable.

Furthermore, the core elements included in the ambition are; creating awareness, competing activities/tasks, addressing issues and creating positive impact on PHM. Therefore, from what is explained in the organization's ambition, the researcher can conclude that it lays in the task management category which is most likely concerns with specific tasks get done efficiently.

B. Vision

The Organization has no vision as basic foundation regarding with communication strategy. By doing so, the communication strategy fails to give emphasize to the tangible contributions that the strategy make to achieve organizational objectives.

C. Organizational Situations (SWOT Analysis)

Regarding organizational situation, the following two main concepts; Internal and External situations of FAO Ethiopia are studied.

Here, the organization identified its strength, weakness, opportunities and threats as an internal situation. The researcher concludes that the SWO analysis needs more clarity and revision.

Therefore, Clarity to those issues should be revised to develop a strong and effective analysis of the true image of the organization from the inside.

Regarding with external situation of the organization, the organization did not give recognition for any kind of external threats, competitors and rivalries which can contribute negatively or positively to the effectiveness of the communication strategy.

D. Accountability

The organization doesn't clearly state how the final outcomes will be measured. Implementation and communication tactics are clearly explained in the communication strategy but it does not include ways how results will be measured.

The study found out that the organization has no clear accountability measures but it has to indicate implementation plan to address PHM to the grass root and other beneficiaries.

E. Stakeholders

FAO's PHM project communication strategy doesn't have a clear image for those three important concepts; stakeholders, publics and audiences. The organization tends to put all those classifications under one group called, Target Audience.

Therefore, the organization seems to confuse basic terms of which stakeholders, publics and audiences and failed properly identify who the enables (internal stakeholders) are, who the partners (external stakeholders) are and who our audiences are in this project under study.

F. Resource

According to Smith (2002), resource is not only about cost breakdown. It's also about competence and realizing to allocate resources through both operational and managerial activities. Therefore, these activities are not explained and addressed in the communication strategy of FAO Ethiopia.

G. Approach

According to Van Ruler (2016), approach is about translating all strategic decisions done in the former building blocks into operational activities. Key message and communication tactics were studied to get accurate result of the approach the organization is using to achieve the desired outcome.

The organization developed key messages for each target audiences. Although, the key message is tends to concern with creating awareness and providing information for the government and partners. However, it lacks strong provocative content in order to persuade the government and partners (could be donors or sponsors) by mobilizing and calling them to take action for a desired positive outcome.

Regarding with communication tactics, given the diversity of the target audiences, the organization chose to use a media mix which is essential in delivering the messages effectively to diversified target audiences. The organization also tried to explain the reasons its using media mix to reach diversified audiences. Whereas, the researcher also find those arrangements with media choice based on target audience's nature, background and status very convenient for the effectiveness of the communication strategy under study.

In conclusion, keeping in mind that identified key audiences are diversified, the organization choice of communication tactics and channel looks efficient for the specific communication strategy.

Having this said, the next section is dedicated for discussion and analysis of the communication strategy under study based on the eight building blocks introduced by Betteke Van Ruler (2019), new perspective for a good strategy development model requirement and its strategic communication elements framework along with Donald Smith's (2002) perspective on Strategic Planning for Public Relations.

Please note that the researcher puts the data taken directly from FAO Ethiopia's communication strategy under italics so the readers don't confuse raw data with analysis.

4.2 Discussion and Analysis

4.2.1 Assessment on the eight building blocks in context to FAO's communication strategy

Van ruler classified the eight building blocks into two main categories which are; Orientation and Implementation. Orientation is the left part of the communication strategy framework which consist ambition, vision, internal situation, external situation whereas, implementation is the right side of the framework which is consisted of accountability, stakeholders, resource and approach.

4.2.1.1 Orientation: the left side of the communication strategy framework

1. Ambition

In communication strategy context, ambition is about the core tasks that the PR professionals want to accomplish in a specific situation. Knowing the core values driving ones effort is also very vital to set a strong ambition.

According to Oxford Dictionary, goals, objectives and ambitions can be used interchangeably, therefore, the researcher will use those words interchangeably throughout the analysis. Using everyday language, a goal/ambition acknowledges the issues and outlines how the organization hope to see it established.

The overall desired outcome of the communication strategy under study is *“to build strong knowledge and awareness among various relevant audiences about the principles, activities and accomplishment of the Project and the role that FAO plays in addressing postharvest losses and enhancing the positive impact of postharvest management.”*

From Van Ruler's good communication strategy perspective, FAO's ambition for the PHM project is strong because it tends to address the questions; what the basic communication values needed for this specific strategy are and what the organization want to achieve.

2. Vision

According to Van Ruler (2016), visions are innovative, counseling and coaching while it is concerned with in what way communication add value to organizational strategic choice. Unfortunately, there is not vision explained or stated by FAO for the communication strategy under study.

Therefore, the Organization has no vision as basic foundation regarding with communication strategy. By doing so, the communication strategy fails to give emphasize to the tangible contributions that the strategy make to achieve organizational objectives.

Organizational Situations (SWOT Analysis)

The strategic planning process involves a public relations audit, an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of an organization. A traditional method drawn from marketing is called SWOT analysis, because it considers the organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The researcher tries to look closely in to the following two main concepts; Internal and External situations of FAO Ethiopia.

3. Internal Situation

Because public relations involves more than words, looking at the organization's performance and structure, and any internal barriers to success is very vital. According to Van Ruler (2016), it is impossible to define and value the importance to us of phenomena in the outside world unless you know what is happening inside the organization.

The organization considers these as strength, weakness, opportunity and threats.

Strength

- *Comparative advantage in exploring the links between food security and postharvest management.*
- *Credible as information source on food and agriculture.*

Weakness

- *Plan to get its voice and viewpoints heard and reported*
- *Harder for the mainstream media to pay attention to activities.*

Opportunity

- *Speak authoritatively on postharvest food loss and management.*
- *Strong backup from FAO global information outreach.*
- *Cooperation with others to echo messages.*

Threats

- *Communication is everyone's responsibility. Therefore, there is a lack of clear and timely communication among the actors involved in the project implementation.*

Here, the organization identified its strength, weakness, opportunities and threats. It's very important to consider potential barriers as well as opportunities within the organization that might contribute positively or negatively to the effectiveness of the communication strategy. Clarity to those issues should be revised to develop a strong and effective analysis of the true image of the organization from the inside.

4. External Situation

Another vital step in any effective communication strategy is to carefully and accurately identify the situation facing an organization. Here, the organization has to consider any impediments or obstacles for the organization that might limit the effectiveness of the communication strategy. The external situation analysis should conclude with an examination of its external environment/publics.

Thus, FAO did not identify any the external situation that the organization is facing. These external situations could be an external threat; competitors and rivalries which can limit the organization's efficiency.

4.2.1.2 Implementation: the right part of the communication strategy framework

5. Accountability

According to Van Ruler (2016), Good ambitions inspire and make clear what the organization want to achieve, but without accountability ambitions are day dreams. Accountability forces professionals to make clear what responsibilities they are holding regarding with their ambitions and how they measure progress.

In this regard, the organization doesn't clearly state how the final outcomes will be measured. Implementation and communication tactics are clearly explained in the communication strategy but it do not include ways how results will be measured.

In conclusion, the organization has no clear accountability measures but it has indicated an implementation plan to address information on PHM to the grass root and other beneficiaries.

6. Stakeholders

According to Betteke Van Ruler (2016), Stakeholders are every individual or group that can influence the organization directly or indirectly. Therefore it is important to get a good picture of the stakeholders to realize ambition. Organizations stakeholders can be classified into internal and external. Most of the time, internal stakeholders are called enablers. They are employees, financial experts, members, trade union, media and the like. In the same manner external stakeholders are known by the name partners. They can be people and institutions with whom the organization corporate to realize the ambition.

In this case, the planner's ability to identify and analyze publics/audience is the foundation of an effective integrated communication. The two elements; Identification and Analysis are both equally important. First, the organization needs to address the right group of people, so as not to misuse organizational resources or miss opportunities to interact with important publics. Second, the planner must carefully examine each public in order to develop a strategy to communicate efficiently.

For Van Ruler (2016), stakeholders are those groups or persons who have a stake in our ambition. An organization has to first identify who the enablers (internal stakeholders) are, who the partners (external stakeholders) are and who the audiences are.

In this regard, FAO's PHM project communication strategy doesn't have a clear image for those three important concepts. The organization tends to put all those classifications under one basket called the "Target Audience".

Finally, the organization seems to confuse the basic terms of stakeholders, public and audiences.

❖ **Target Audience/ Publics**

For Van Ruler (2016), good communication planning calls for the identification of an organization's various publics. As pointed out at the beginning of this section, there is no such thing as a general public. Rather, each public is linked with the organization in a unique relationship.

The target Audience for FAO's PHM project communication strategy are;

- ***Policy makers:** Government and local institution representatives;*
- ***International Development Partner and FAO:** Swiss Confederation, FAO staff and partners*
- ***Implementation partners:** Ministry and bureaus of agriculture;*
- ***The private sector:** steel silo manufacturers, microfinance institutions; and*
- ***Final beneficiaries:** targeted farming households, cooperative unions.*

The organization has different types of audiences based on their contribution and relationship to the organization.

A main part of developing an effective communication campaign is to identify the appropriate specific publics, called key publics or strategic publics.

In conclusion, the organization seems to identify diversified key audiences which want to communicate with the organization but missed some other key audiences or publics like opinion leaders while they are implementing the project specific communication plan mostly to grassroots audiences.

7. Resource

According to Betteke Van Ruler (2016), a very important part of the strategy concerns resources. Resource is about being equipped to do the job. It is about budget, budget allocation and about competences. In our case, the organization puts cost estimations to bring the communication strategy to life. It tried to fight for effective utilization of budget based on organizational ambitions.

Though, Resource is not only about cost breakdown. It's also about competence and agreeing to allocate resources through both operational and managerial activities. These activities are not explained in the communication strategy.

8. Approach

According to Van Ruler (2016), approach is about translating all strategic decisions done in the former building blocks into operational activities. This is “the proof of the pudding”. All decisions in the other building blocks need to come together in the approach.

Good strategy incorporates list of activities and their budget. In other words, it is the translation of ambition and accountability towards stakeholders. FAO identified various ways to impalement the communication strategy which goes in line with its ambition. Therefore, the communication strategy appears to be strong in this regard.

4.2.2 Assessment on the main communication strategy elements based on Donald D. Smith's perspective on Strategic Planning for Public Relations

1. Ambition

It is also better to have a closer look on which management situation categories the ambition of FAO set for the communication strategy lays.

According to Smith (2002), communication goals can be categorized as relating to three different types of management situations: reputation management goals, which deal with the identity and perception of the organization; relationship management goals, which focus on how the organization connects with its publics; and task management goals, which are concerned with getting certain things done.

The core elements included in the ambition are; creating awareness, completing activities/tasks, addressing issues and creating positive impact on PHM.

Thus, from what is explained in the organization's ambition, the researcher can conclude that it lays in the task management category which is most likely concerns with specific tasks get done efficiently.

The organization also sets specific objectives to elaborate more on the general desired outcome.

2. Objectives

According to Van Ruler (2016), goals /ambitions are stated in general terms and lacks measures; these will come later in the objectives.

Thus, FAO Ethiopia sets specific objectives to measure the desired goal/ambition. They are;

- *Build knowledge and awareness on the positive impacts that a successful postharvest management practice can have on rural communities and on the importance of postharvest to address food insecurity;*
- *Contribute to improved coordination and information exchange on postharvest management related issues;*
- *Improve knowledge to contribute to FAO's work on reducing food loss and postharvest management;*

- *Promote the uptake of lessons learned and policy recommendations amongst policy makers;*
- *Ensure public access to the project materials, guidance documents and other relevant resources.*

Therefore, paying attention to those objectives from Smith's (2002) perspective on objectives, the specific criteria of public relation objectives for effective and practical objectives will be discussed briefly in context of the above ambition.

1. **Goal-Rooted.** Objectives are rooted in goals/ambitions. They are based on the organization's goal statements, which themselves grow out of the mission or vision that the organization has defined for itself. In this case, the ambition being studied looks strong and goes in line with the goal/desired outcome.
2. **Impact-Oriented.** Objectives are oriented towards impact they can achieve. They define effect you hope to make on your public, focusing not on the tools but on the intended accomplishments. FAO's project specific ambition looks impact-oriented because it gives emphasize to knowledge awareness creating to bring a positive behavioral change for their publics. The ways how the organization planned to bring those impacts will be explored in the next sub topics.
3. **Public-Focused.** Objectives are linked determinedly to a particular public and are based on the wants, interests and needs of that public. Objectives for one public may be similar to those for another public, but each must be distinct. On the communication strategy, publics were classified in five categories namely; policy makers, international partners, implementation partners, the private sector manufacturers and final beneficiaries which are cooperative unions and targeted farming households. The PR professionals also developed key messages specifically to each public. In this regard, the researcher can conclude that the objectives are public-focused.
4. **Singular.** Objectives are singular, focusing on one desired response from one public. When developing objectives, saying that the organization wants "to increase awareness and generate positive attitudes" makes the objective difficult to evaluate its effectiveness. In this regard, the objective being studied seems to have gaps in giving emphasis to the effectiveness of each objective. The researcher understands that a

communication strategy can have multiple objectives, but each objective should be stated separately in order to make sure that the objectives are measurable and attainable.

2. Target Audience

According to Ronald D. Smith (2002), publics and audiences have different concepts. Most practitioners confuse the two. Audiences are merely people who pay attention to a particular medium of communication and receive messages through it. An organization's relationship with an audience is usually brief, such as the length of time it takes to read an article or listen to a speech much more temporary than its relationship with a public.

FAO for the PHM project communication strategy identified diversified target audiences and stakeholders based on their role to the specific project based communication strategy. Thus, as thoroughly discussed in the above analysis, FAO fails to properly identify who the enablers (internal stakeholders), the partners (external stakeholders) and the target audiences are.

Additionally, the organization didn't identify opinion leaders from the public. According to Ronald D. Smith (2002), an opinion leader is an influential role model who has the respect and confidence of the public. Members of publics look to opinion leaders as they obtain information, form attitudes and opinions, and determine action.

The PHM project is implemented in 4 woredas in Ethiopia. Asll the 4 woredas are found in the rural areas of the country. In this regard, opinion leaders are particularly useful because they generate word-of-mouth support, perhaps the most effective type of communication precisely because opinion leaders are independent. That is, they do not speak under the support of the organization, nor do they directly benefit from it. Because of this independence they are often quite believable.

Smith (2002) highlighted that organizations can find formal opinion leaders with structured roles, such as elected or appointed officials, and informal opinion leaders, who exert influence simply because they are informed, articulate and recognized leaders on a particular issue.

3. Key Message

For Smith (2002), having identified your publics and established objectives for what is to be achieved, and having set into motion the way the organization is preparing to act to achieve those objectives, it is time to turn your attention to how best to communicate. Since strategic communication is carefully planned communication, this is an important step.

Several different approaches to communication are used in public relations and related fields. Three varieties are worth meticulous consideration: information, persuasion and dialogue. These align loosely with the classic models of public relations. Informative communication plays out as press agency and public information; persuasive communication is asymmetric, with a focus on advocacy and influence. Dialogic communication is a symmetric approach that is rooted in relationships.

Information focuses on the content and channels of communication where as persuasive message consciously attempts to influence people, using ethical means that enhance a democratic society. Dialogue involves the deeply conscious interaction of two parties in communication. (Ronald D. Smith, 2002) In the following paragraphs, key messages will be discussed with the above perspectives.

The organization developed various key messages for each target audience categories.

- ***For final beneficiaries: (targeted farming households, cooperative unions)***
 - o *Adopting postharvest technologies by farmers can reduce postharvest losses and contribute to improvement of income and livelihoods;*
 - o *PHM technologies and skills maintains the quality of grains so as to benefit the nutrition, food quality and income for farmers; and*
 - o *Smallholder farmers need to adopt new, sustainable agricultural methods to increase productivity and income.*
 - o *Adopting postharvest technologies, learning new PHM knowledge and skills, improving income and livelihoods*

Here, the key messages tend to be informative which focuses on informing farmers that PHM technology works while improving their incomes, productivity and livelihood.

Looking closely again to the organization's communication strategy to check if the key messages support the main ambition/objective of the organization; "To build strong knowledge and awareness among various relevant audiences about the principles, activities and accomplishment of the Project and the role that FAO plays in addressing postharvest losses and enhancing the positive impact of postharvest management."

Creating awareness and building strong knowledge are being the core objective of the communication strategy, the key messages for farmers in the 4 specific woredas looks supportive of the desired outcome.

- ***For the government and partners:***

- *Increasing awareness, knowledge, skills and capacity of relevant actors at different levels can improve postharvest management practices.*
- *They need to invest in PHM technologies and practices and put the right policies and strategies in place to target rural populations, promote pro-poor investment and growth and address food loss.*
- *They can explore and create market opportunities for farmers' grain produces and creating access to PHM technologies produces Identify market linkages for marketing of quality grains and accessing of PHM technologies*
- *They need to enhance effective policy advocacy at national and regional level for promotion of good practices in postharvest management systems*
- *They must create opportunities for greater private sector investments in PHM practices and technologies.*
- *Appropriate regulatory frameworks and institutional structures for implementation of the post-harvest management strategy introduced and supported*
- *Call for action – investing in PHM practices and technologies, create opportunity for private sector investment, improve institutional structures and regulatory frameworks for implementation*

Here, the key message is tends to concern with creating awareness and providing information for the government and partners. Though, it lacks strong provocative content in order to persuade the government and partners (e.g. donors or sponsors) by mobilizing and calling them to take action

for a desired positive outcome. Key messages have to be clear, precise and strong while carrying the intended message to the right audience.

- ***For the private sector:*** (steel silo manufacturers, microfinance institutions)
 - *The private sector should become a key ally in the fight against food loss and contribute to food security. The financial sector needs to put financial tools in the hands of smallholder farmers, microenterprises and economically marginalized communities. It needs to avail financing options for developing and promoting postharvest technologies.*
 - *Call for action – a key factor in the fight against food loss and postharvest loss reduction would be to make available financing options for developing and promoting postharvest technologies.*

At this point, by calling the private sector audience for action, the organization used a persuasive approach.

For the media:

- *The media can contribute through communication for development programs. They can share innovations, share knowledge and new digital tools with farmers. They can also leverage their reach to educate the public about postharvest management practices.*
- *Media can share innovations, share knowledge and new digital tools with farmers and the media can leverage their reach to educate the public about postharvest management practices.*

The research found these key messages very poorly articulated in terms of language usage/choice. Informative approach used to address those specific audiences.

In general, language usage, usage of weak expressions and lack of persuasive methods seems to appear as a gap in developing key messages for these specific audiences.

In general, key messages for all types of audiences that the organization identified use informative approach to reach to those audiences. Although a persuasive approach can be seen slightly where they call audience for action but the persuasive skills seems to be very weak in terms of using provocative expressions.

4. Communication Activities and Channels

For Donald D. Smith (2002), communication tactics are the visible elements of a strategic plan. They are what people see and do web sites and news releases, tours, billboards, and so much more. Tactics are also the elements of the plan that can carry a heavy price tag, so planning and coordination are particularly important.

The communication strategy under study, depending on the audience category, multiple media channels from electronic, online and print are available to use at the national level and in the regions where the project is implemented. Radio is the most popular channel among rural communities. According to FAO (2018), TV access is high among urban communities, but not very high in the country, especially among rural communities, and social media are used only by 10 percent of the population. Newspapers are not widespread since a large part of the rural population is illiterate.

The organization identified media landscape planned to achieve target results are as follows.

- *National radio, FM radios, regional radios and community radios would be a good means to convey key messages to beneficiary farmers, rural communities, and extension workers because of its fair access to the rural community.*
- *Websites, Televisions, newspapers and Social media channels would be suitable to reach out to policy makers, government officials, donors, the private sector and general urban communities because of their access to new technologies and social media platforms.*
- *Printing material (posters, banners, leaflets, info graphics and billboards) are extremely useful to reach out to rural communities.*

Given the diversity of the target audiences, the organization chose to use a media mix which is essential in delivering the messages effectively to diversified target audiences. The organization also tried to explain the reasons its using media mix to reach diversified audiences. Whereas, the researcher also find those arrangements with media choice based on target audience's nature, background and status very convenient for the effectiveness of the communication strategy under study.

Hence, delivery of the main message will be carried out by the organization in the following forms:

- *Via direct communications (workshops, meetings, trainings) with primary and key stakeholders including national authorities and local population in the main focal areas of the project.*
- *Via available radio and TV communications with tailored messages for target communities and partners*
- *Public information outreach, including press releases upon major initiatives/milestones of the project and media interviews.*
- *Online and Web-based communications, including webpage, email distribution lists for Newsletters, and social media channels.*

Generally, keeping in mind that identified key audiences are diversified, the organization choice of communication tactics and channel looks efficient for the specific communication strategy.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1. Conclusion

The researcher carried out an analysis of the document obtained from FAO Ethiopia. This was based on the eight building blocks introduced by Betteke Van Ruler (2019), in the new perspective for a good strategy development model requirement and its strategic communication elements framework along with Donald Smith's (2002) perspective on Strategic Planning for Public Relations. Here are the conclusions drawn from the major findings.

1. From Van Ruler's good communication strategy perspective, FAO's ambitions for the PHM project communication strategy is strong because it tends to address the questions; what the basic communication values needed for this specific strategy are and what the organization want to achieve.

The researcher also concluded that the ambition stated in the communication strategy is goal and impact oriented as well as public focused.

On the other hand, the specific objectives incorporated in the general ambition seems weak as it does not state objectives separately for each diversified public in order to make sure that their objectives are measurable and attainable. In other words, the objectives are not singular which means the organization does not focus on one desired response from a single public rather objectives are generalized for the general public.

2. Regarding with vision, the communication strategy is weak because it has no vision as an important component of the communication strategy.

Van Ruler (2019) highlights that vision offers a lens to look at the internal and external situations. Therefore, the communication strategy has failed to give emphasize to the tangible contributions that the strategy make to achieve organizational objectives.

For the organizational situation, FAO Ethiopia tried doing a SWOT analysis that showcases the organization's strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to get a coherent view of the organization's internal and external situations. From this, the

researcher concluded that the organization strongly and logically articulated the organization's internal situation by identifying possible opportunities and treats whereas the organization did not give recognition for any kind of external threats, competitors and rivalries which can contribute negatively or positively to the effectiveness of the communication strategy.

3. For van Ruler (2019), accountability is about making your added value explicit. It is also about taking responsibility and answering for your actions. Therefore, the organization doesn't clearly state how the final outcomes will be measured. Implementation and communication tactics are clearly explained in the communication strategy but it does not include ways how results will be measured.
4. Betteke Van Ruler (2019), emphasized that the most important stakeholders for communication strategy are, the users, then the influencers and sponsors who have to commit to the strategy or in any case be kept in loop (the enablers), and finally the partners whose active contributions are needed to achieve the communication ambitions. FAO Ethiopia tends to put all those classifications in one category called Target Audience.

Therefore, the organization seems to confuse basic terms and types of stakeholders, and failed to properly identify who the enables (internal stakeholders) are, who the partners (external stakeholders) are and who the audiences are in the communication strategy under study.

5. There should be evident that there is a symbiotic relationship between resources and ambition: a complex ambition cannot be accomplished with scant resources, nor a strategically oriented and complex ambition with operational staff only. (ibid)

Therefore, competence and effective allocation of resources through both operational and managerial activities are not explained and addressed in the communication strategy as concluded by the researcher.

6. The organization developed key messages for each target audiences as a tactic or approach. The researcher concludes that key messaged developed/ articulated by the

organization lacks being persuasiveness in order to persuade the government and partners (could be donors or sponsors) by mobilizing and calling them to take action for a desired positive outcome.

5.2 Recommendation

Based on the data analysis and major findings, the researcher forwarded the following recommendation.

- The organization has to identify and position objectives separately for each diversified public in order to make sure that their objectives are measurable and attainable.
- The organization must have a well articulated vision. Without an explicit vision, the organization can't look through an accurate image of the organization's current internal and external situations.
- The organization have to identify and give recognition for any kind of external threats, competitors and rivalries which can contribute negatively or positively to the effectiveness of the communication strategy.
- FAO Ethiopia has to clearly state the final measurable outcomes, how it will be measured and what contributions that the organization holds in the communication strategy under study to enhance its accountability among various stakeholders and target audiences.
- The users, influencers and sponsors who have to commit to the strategy or in any case be kept in loop (the enablers), and the partners whose active contributions that are needed to achieve the communication ambitions must be identified and addressed clearly in the communication strategy.
- Besides allocating budget breakdowns, the organization must explain both operational and managerial activities to have a very competent and effective communication strategy.
- Key messages need be articulated in a persuasive manner to plead the case at hand to the government, stakeholders and identified partners (could be donors or sponsors) to mobilize and call them to take action for a desired positive outcome.

- Policy makers have to amend possible policies and laws in realizing of the importance of developing quality and efficient communication strategies/strategic plan to help organizations position themselves in the minds of their publics and creating an open communication system.
- Finally, further research should be conducted by communication scholars using this study as a reference for more improvement of developments of communication strategy/plan of FAO Ethiopia in particular and other organizations in Ethiopia.

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Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
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Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC

Reducing Food Losses through Improved Post Harvest

COMMUNICATION AND C4D STRATEGY

2018 - 2022

RATIONALE AND PURPOSE OF THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The present Communication Strategy is intended to foster visibility and raise the public profile of the Reducing Food Losses through Improved Post Harvest Management (PHM) in Ethiopia – Phase II project - GCP/ETH/099/SWI.

The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources (MOALRs) implement the PHM Project, funded by the Swiss Confederation, and technically supported by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). FAO is the executing agency and responsible for project implementation in accordance with standard agreements between FAO, the Donor and the Government of the Ethiopia. It is implemented in Amhara, Oromia, and Tigray and SNNP Regional States.

The **main objective** is to address the problem of post-harvest losses for the major grains by strengthening and promoting the postharvest management and household storage technologies as well as practices and results learned from Phase I of the project.

Regional level activities include technical advice at policy advocacy level, promoting postharvest technologies among farmers, awareness raising of smallholder farmers, knowledge and skill training, initiating private sector investment on PHM, and creating access to market opportunities.

The present **Communication Strategy** aims to **systematize** the dissemination of information and exchange of knowledge about PHM, its principles, priorities and achievements to help the project realize its outputs. The strategy guides and harmonizes the communication efforts carried out at all levels, supporting the achievement of the main objectives of the Project.

The Strategy also outlines a **set of products and activities** to ensure visibility of PHM, build up awareness among stakeholders, facilitate the involvement of partners into the project implementation, and ensure consistent and effective communication with target audiences.

While there is overlap in how the **key audiences** will be targeted, there are also **specific media** that will work best for certain groups. For example, most Government officials and extension workers will receive their knowledge through meetings, trainings, websites, social media and mass media (TV and newspapers). For local communities, direct messaging through workshops, radios, videos, posters and leaflets would be preferred. For the general public, the mass media - such as national radios and TVs - will be the best way to inform about our activities.

All the communication products developed in the framework of the Project will be compliant with the requirements indicated in the FAO Corporate Communication Policy and with the FAO Logo Policy and Guidelines.

PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTH

Comparative advantage in exploring the links between food security and postharvest management. Credible as information source on food and agriculture.

WEAKNESS

Manoeuvre to get its voice and viewpoints heard and reported
Harder for the mainstream media to pay attention to our activities.

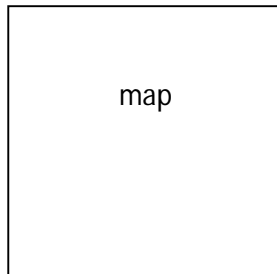
OPPORTUNITY

Speak authoritatively on postharvest food loss and management. Strong backup from FAO global information outreach. Cooperation with others to echo our messages.

THREAT

Communication is everyone's responsibility. Lack of clear and timely communication among the actors involved in the project implementation.

ETHIOPIA: snapshot



Target Areas:

1. Amhara Region – 4 weredas
2. Oromia Region – 4 weredas
3. SNNP Region – 4 weredas
4. Tigray Region – 2 weredas

Main spoken languages: Amharic, AfaanOromoo, Tigrigna, SNNPR

Main Actors:

1. PHM team at FAO country office
2. **Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources (MoA)**,
3. **Zonal** and *woreda* bureaus of agriculture and agricultural offices;
4. **National Steering Committee:**
 - Ministry of Finance and Economic Cooperation (MOFEC)
 - Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Resources
 - Higher Learning Institutions
 - Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research
 - Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
 - Swiss Confederation
 - Target regional states (Amhara, Oromia, SNNP and Tigray)
5. Target farmers in the regions
6. Youth artisans (private sector)
7. Microfinance Institutions
8. Cooperative unions
9. The media

MEDIA LANDSCAPE

Depending on the audience category, multiple media channels from electronic, online and print are available to use at the national level and in the regions that the project is implemented. Radio is the most popular channel among rural communities. TV penetration is high among urban communities, but not very high in the country, especially among rural communities, and social media are used only by 10 percent of the population. Newspapers are not widespread since a large part of the rural population is illiterate.

- **National radio, FM radios, regional radios and community radios** would be a good means to convey our key messages to beneficiary farmers, rural communities, and extension workers

- **Websites, Televisions, newspapers and Social media channels** would be only suitable to reach out to policy makers, government officials, donors, the private sector and general urban communities;
- **Printing material (posters, banners, leaflets, infographics, billboards)** are popular and extremely useful to reach out to rural communities.

CORE ACTIVITIES AND COMMUNICATION CHANNEL

Given the diversity of the target audiences, a media mix is essential in delivering the messages.

Hence, delivery of the main message will be carried out in three different forms:

- Via **direct communications** (workshops, meetings, trainings) with primary and key stakeholders including national authorities and local population in the main focal areas of the project.
- Via available **radio and TV** communications with tailored messages for target communities and partners
- **Public information outreach**, including press releases upon major initiatives/milestones of the project and media interviews.
- **Online and Web-based communications**, including webpage, email distribution lists for Newsletters, and social media channels.

CORE ACTIVITIES

Activities underpinning the execution of the Communication Strategy will include:

- Production of various printing materials and contents
- Liaison with national and regional mainstream media to disseminate content for visibility and knowledge transfer;
- Production of online and off-line information and audio-visual material;
- Development of website, social media and blog contents;
- Organization of informational seminars, meetings and workshops at global and country level;
- Media events, exhibitions, and radio campaigns.

MAIN COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Mainstream media: using national and regional radio and TV programs/spots to reach out to key stakeholders. Collaborate with the media to acquire regular airtime and space to feature PHM awareness and knowledge for target beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

Website and web communication: the main communication reference and information source is the FAO website. The webpage is constantly updated and provides background information, the conceptual framework of the Project, and all available related knowledge products and relevant resources.

Social media promotion: promotion of PHM, FAO social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+).

Information and promotional materials: To be printed and distributed/displayed among the stakeholders, during meetings, trainings, public events etc. The main PHM information, knowledge and promotional packages to be developed are – project brief, knowledge product, infographic, promotion and training posters, stand-alone roll-up banners, animated training manual and teaser animated video, knowledge booklet, newsletters, good practice documents (booklet and video).

Press release/news story: these be composed in order to preview, initiate and celebrate milestone achievements. The press release will be published either before or right after the event or release of a report, depending on the situation.

Press campaigns and radio briefing with journalists: This will be organized when the news value of the matter is high or there is another special reason to arrange a meeting with journalists.

Newsletter: A newsletter, published on quarterly basis, will be distributed among key stakeholders and general public via website, social media and email recipients, will feature significant developments within the Project.

Seminar and workshops: The project's team will continue to organize seminars, workshops and public events tailored on the basis of a theme or participant profile that will seek to engage in a dialogue various target audiences: from small groups of experts to a wider community.

COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

The communication objectives are closely interlinked with the operational objectives of the Project and support their achievement.

The Communication Strategy sets out an overall desired outcome:

To build strong knowledge and awareness among various relevant audiences about the principles, activities and accomplishment of the Project and the role that FAO plays in addressing postharvest losses and enhancing the positive impact of postharvest management.

The Strategy sets as its specific measurable objectives:

- **Build knowledge and awareness** on the positive impacts that a successful postharvest management practice can have on rural communities and on the importance of postharvest to address food insecurity;
- **Contribute to improved coordination and information exchange** on postharvest management related issues;
- **Improve knowledge** to contribute to FAO's work on reducing food loss and postharvest management;
- **Promote the uptake of lessons learned** and policy recommendations amongst policy makers;
- **Ensure public access** to the project materials, guidance documents and other relevant resources.

TARGET AUDIENCE AND KEY MESSAGES

Main Target Audiences

- **Policy makers:** Government and local institution representatives;
- **International Development Partner and FAO:** Swiss Confederation, FAO staff and partners
- **Implementation partners:** Ministry and bureaus of agriculture;
- **The private sector:** steel silo manufacturers, microfinance institutions; and
- **Final beneficiaries:** targeted farming households, cooperative unions.

Key Messages

For final beneficiaries:

- Adopting postharvest technologies by farmers can reduce postharvest losses and contribute to improvement of income and livelihoods;
- PHM technologies and skills maintains the quality of grains so as to benefit the nutrition, food quality and income for farmers; and
- **Smallholder farmers** need to adopt new, sustainable agricultural methods to increase productivity and income.
- **Adopting postharvest technologies, learning new PHM knowledge and skills, improving income and livelihoods**

For the government and partners:

- Increasing awareness, knowledge, skills and capacity of relevant actors at different levels can improve postharvest management practices.
- They need to invest in PHM technologies and practices and put the right policies and strategies in place to target rural populations, promote pro-poor investment and growth and address food loss.
- They can explore and create market opportunities for farmers' grain produces and creating access to PHM technologies produces Identify market linkages for marketing of quality grains and accessing of PHM technologies
- They need to enhance effective policy advocacy at national and regional level for promotion of good practices in postharvest management systems
- They must create opportunities for greater private sector investments in PHM practices and technologies.
- **Appropriate regulatory frameworks and institutional structures for implementation of the post-harvest management strategy introduced and supported**
- **Call for action – investing in PHM practices and technologies, create opportunity for private sector investment, improve institutional structures and regulatory frameworks for implementation**

For the private sector:

- The **private sector** should become a key ally in the fight against food loss and contribute to food security. The financial sector needs to put financial tools in the hands of smallholder farmers and microenterprises and economically marginalized communities. It needs to avail financing options for developing and promoting postharvest technologies.
- **Call for action – a key ally in the fight against food loss and postharvest loss reduction by avail financing options for developing and promoting postharvest technologies.**

For the media:

- The media can contribute through communication for development programs. They can share innovations, share knowledge and new digital tools with farmers and the media can leverage their reach to educate the public about postharvest management practices.
- Media can share innovations, share knowledge and new digital tools with farmers and the media can leverage their reach to educate the public about postharvest management practices.

IMPLEMENTATION

Communication work plan and links to project outputs

Output	Programme Activities	Communication Activities and Products	Audience
1.1 Improved (modern and indigenous) postharvest technologies and storage practices scaled up and out	<i>1.1.1 Conduct study on business model for fabrication, distribution and marketing of postharvest technologies for promoting business options on postharvest handling technologies</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct communication context analysis, map communication capacity, tools and channels at FAO and governmental level, through a desk review and the submission of a questionnaire to key counterparts • Identification of events and initiatives related to postharvest and plan comms activities. • Prepare a project brief/fact sheet in English and local languages. • Stand-alone roll-up stands • News release, social media 	Policy makers Government officials Partners (donor and implementers) Private sector
	<i>1.1.2 Organize workshop to disseminate the findings of the study on business model of metal silo and market opportunities of galvanized sheet metal</i>		
	<i>1.1.3 Support and run Farmers Field School (FFS) to create learning platforms on postharvest management</i>		
1.2 Awareness of smallholder farmers on postharvest management improved	<i>1.2.1 Support promotional activities for postharvest handling and household cereals and pulses storage technologies by using various marketing tools</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radio spots • Posters and manuals (training) • Short video • Posters • TV spots (regional) 	Farmers Extension workers Steel silo manufacturers
	<i>1.2.2 Facilitate experience and information sharing including holding of exchange visits on postharvest management within and out of the country</i>		
	<i>1.2.3 Support professional societies to engage in advocacy of improved postharvest management based empirical evidences</i>		
1.3 Knowledge and skills of key actors on improved	<i>1.3.1 Prepare, disseminate training and teaching aids on Post-Harvest management and business skills</i>		
	<i>1.3.2 Provide technical advice and support on</i>		

postharvest management and household grain storage enhanced	metal silo fabrication, management and business skills of metal silo for artisans in the new selected woredas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radio program (on national and regional media) • Training posters • Short video • Infographics • Billboards (C4D messages) 	Farmers Extension workers Steel silo manufacturers
	1.3.3 Provide technical advice and support on postharvest management, improved household grain storage and business skills development for extension workers, cooperatives, artisans and others.		
2.1 Financing options/services to invest in improved PHM are available to smallholder farmers and small enterprises	2.1.1 Conduct assessment on bottlenecks and opportunities for inclusion of PHM technologies into credit and saving schemes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infographics • Information leaflet • Standalone roll-up stand • Radio spot 	Microfinance Institutions Government officials Implementing partners Cooperative Unions
	2.1.2 Support for the development of financing products for easier access to finance for smallholder farmers artisans		
	2.1.3 Provide technical advice on business and financial aspects of postharvest management to artisans, MFIs and cooperative union		
	2.1.4 Conduct study on business model for fabrication, distribution and marketing of postharvest technologies for promoting business options on postharvest handling technologies.		
	2.1.5 Facilitate discussion forums on implementation of business model		
	2.1.6 Provide advice and technical support to artisans to increase production of metal silos for household storage business model		
2.2 Market linkages for marketing of quality grains and accessing of PHM technologies identified and promoted.	2.2.1 Mapping out available financial services in the project woredas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information leaflet 	Micro financial institutions
	2.2.2 Facilitate market linkages and negotiate between micro finance institutions, artisans and farmers cooperatives for allocation of credit on postharvest handling technologies		

3.1 Effective policy advocacy enhanced at national and regional level for promotion of good practices in postharvest management systems	<p>3.1.1 Facilitate discussion with decision makers to support artisans with tax rebates on imported galvanised sheet metal or similar supports.</p> <p>3.1.2 Support appropriate institutional structures in the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and Bureau of Agriculture to coordinate postharvest management interventions of stakeholders and clarify the mandate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information leaflet • Policy brief • TV spots 	<p>Decision makers</p> <p>Government officials</p> <p>Implementing partners</p>
3.2 Appropriate institutional structures and capacity to support postharvest management of grains and pulses strengthened	<p>3.2.1 Support ATVET to integrate postharvest management and storage of grain and pulses in their training topics/modules</p> <p>3.2.2 Strengthen effective functioning of postharvest management platform</p> <p>3.2.3 Support appropriate institutional structures in the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and Bureau of Agriculture to coordinate postharvest management interventions of stakeholders and clarify the mandate</p> <p>3.1.3 Strengthen steering committees at national and regional levels that are coordinated at the Ministry of Agriculture and Regional Bureaus respectively</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infographics • Information leaflet • Stand-alone banner 	<p>Decision makers</p> <p>Government officials</p> <p>Steering committee</p>

Generic communication products:

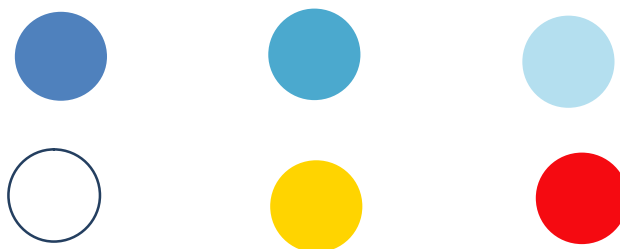
Activities	Products	Audience
Good practice documentation	Video	Policy makers, FAO, implementing partners, donor, general audience
Regular project progress	Bulletin/booklet	Policy makers, FAO, implementing partners, donor, general audience
Photo documentation	Photo Gallery	Policy makers, FAO, implementing partners, donor, general audience

VISUAL IDENTITY

A simple visual identity has been developed to ensure Project with visibility and recognisability. All the info products developed in the framework of PHM should feature the same visual patterns.

Main colours

R:44 G:131 B:197
R:75 G:169 B:206
R:180 G:223 B:239
R:255 G:255 B:255
R:255 G:212 B:0
R:245 G:10 B:17



Project title

Font: **Calibri** – Bold

Color code: R:44 G:131 B:197

Headers

Font: **calibri** – Bold

Color code: R:75 G:169 B:206



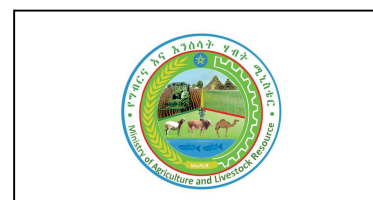
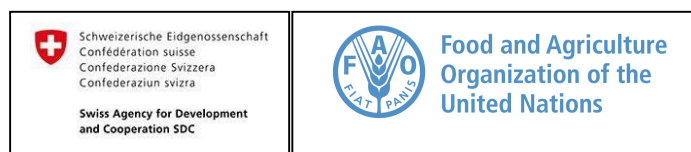
FAO logo

White logo block against blue background (R:44 G:131 B:197). To be placed always on the top left-hand corner of the info products.

Minimum diameter: 2cm.

Implementation and resource partner's logos need to appear on all the information products.

When presented together with other logos, the FAO logo should have the same size of the other logos and appear with the same prominence.



Photos and video footage:

We should aim at projecting the image and footage of an action-oriented project. Pictures and footage of rural farming communities will be given prominence as they are the beneficiaries of our interventions. In particular, it is advised to use as much as possible images that depict the scenario we want to achieve.

COST ESTIMATE

No	Activities	Timeline in the project life	Estimated cost
1	Project briefs and fact sheets	twice	35 000
2	Radio spots targeting beneficiary communities and agricultural extension workers	Four times	60 000
3	TV spots targeting agricultural experts, decision makers, and policy makers	twice	50 000
4	Weekly radio programmes targeting beneficiary communities with awareness raising and development communication messages	40 months	250 000
5	Short animation to support training and promotion on social media	once	180 000
6	Good practice project video	Once	400 000
7	Publications (banners, leaflets, infographics, brochures, newsletters, etc) targeting general audience, agricultural experts, extension workers, and beneficiary communities	Throughout the project period	450 000
8	Billboards – with development communication messages and awareness creation	2 in each wereda	600 000
9	Photo documentation	twice	30 000
	Total		2,055,000