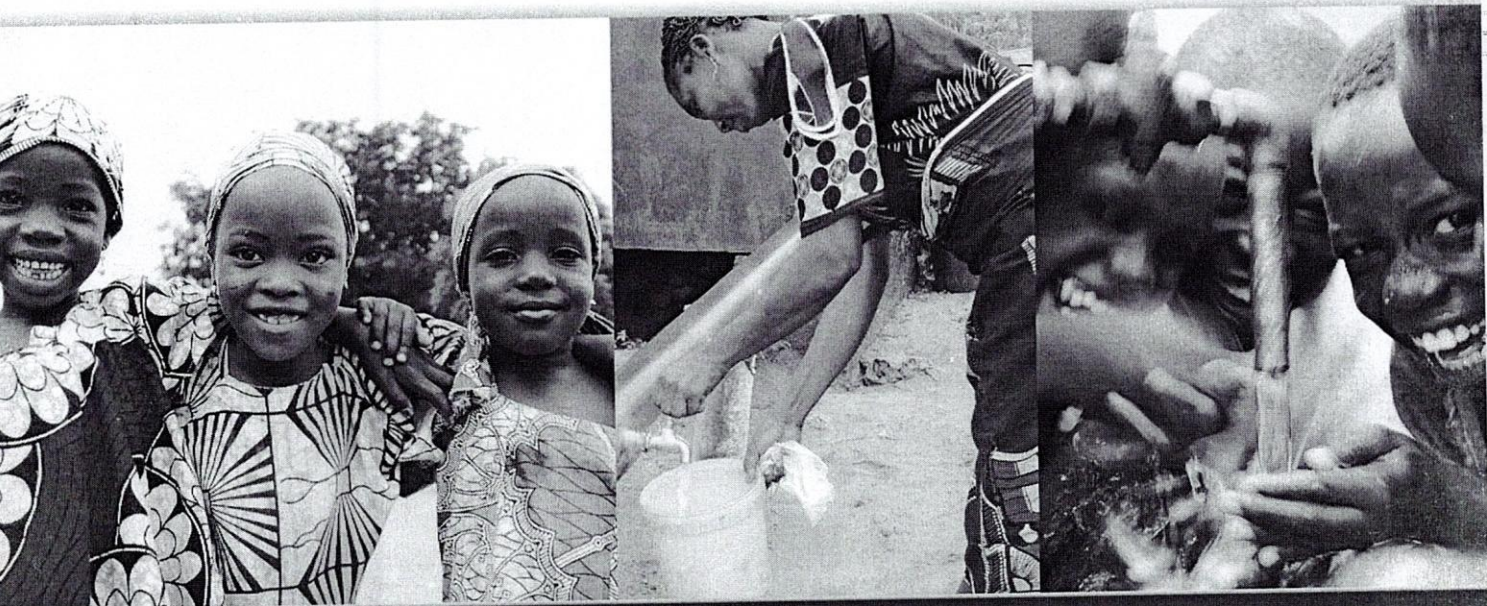


sparc



Nigeria Governors' Forum: developing a
communication strategy

Interim Report:

December 2011

The opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Department for International Development

Contents

Abbreviations and Acronyms	iv
Executive Summary	v
Short summary (for use on websites and in indexes)	v
Full summary	v
Section One: Overview	1
Recommendation	1
Section Two: Understanding communications strategies and plans	2
What is a communications strategy?	2
What is a communications operational plan?	2
What is a communications activity plan?	2
Section Three: Review of documents	3
Situation analysis	3
Communication goal and objectives	4
Communication activities (leading to outputs)	4
Operational plan	5
Annex One: Outline for an NGF communication strategy	7
Annex Two: NGF Knowledge Management Initiative	9
What the NGF communication strategy should aim to do	9
NGF KM framework	9
NGF KM workplans	9
April-June 2011	9
September 2011-February 2012	9



Abbreviations and Acronyms

EDFA	Myani Bukar: PLEASE DEFINE
EDSR	Myani Bukar: PLEASE DEFINE
KM	Knowledge management
NGF	Nigeria Governors' Forum
SMART	Specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely
SPARC	State Partnership for Accountability, Responsiveness and Capability

Executive Summary

Short summary (for use on websites and in indexes)

This report suggests various ways in which the Nigeria Governors' Forum could draw on the resources it has already developed in order to produce a strong, achievable communications strategy.

Full summary

This report outlines what a communications strategy should consist of and indicates what material we can draw from in the *Nigeria Governors' Forum Strategic Plan*, the *Nigeria Governor's Forum Framework*, and the *Nigeria Governors' Forum Knowledge Management Work Plan* in order to develop a strong, achievable communication strategy. We then recommend the steps that could be taken in the next year (2012). Annex One is an outline for developing a communication strategy and Annex Two is a brief overview of how NGF's communications strategy will support the Nigeria Governors' Forum's knowledge management initiative.



Section One: Overview

The communication strategy for the Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) is being developed in the context of the NGF Strategic Plan 2010-2012. The Plan emphasises knowledge management. This report provides general advice for the production of a communications strategy within the NGF Knowledge Management Initiative. We base our advice on our review of three documents provided to us:

- Nigeria Governors' Forum Strategic Plan[1]
- Nigeria Governor's Forum Framework v Final Draft 27 March 2011[1]
- NGF KM work plan phase I

Recommendation

The first step is to develop a communication strategy for a three-to-five-year timeframe. The strategy will guide a 'joined up' set of communication activities that will reinforce the NGF's messages by focusing them on priority concerns, targeting them to specific audiences, and repeating them so that they are accepted and are acted on.

The second step is to develop a communications operational plan for 2012 that matches the personnel and budget available.

The third step is to draw up activity plans for each activity in the communications operational plan 2012 for implementation.

Section Two: Understanding communications strategies and plans

What is a communications strategy?

A **communications strategy** is a document used to guide and plan communications within an organisation. It sets the overall direction (goals, objectives, audiences, messages) for an organisation's communications activities, taking account of the resources (budget and personnel) available or to be made available. The communication strategy should be short (4-8 pages) and succinct so as to enable users to read and understand it quickly.

Note that according to the Governor's Forum's own thinking, the Communication Strategy should set directions that "should not be affected by external factors" and that "... outputs ... should be wholly within our [NGF's] control" (Nigeria_Governors'_Forum_Strategic_Plan[1], page 9, paragraph 2 under section 8 Outputs). This means that the Communication Strategy should be based on what the NGF can **realistically achieve** within its present means, and that it should help to **strengthen staff skills** and **provide a foundation that can be built on** as, or if, more resources become available.

What is a communications operational plan?

The **communications operational plan** sets out the communication activities that NGF commits to undertake to carry the strategy forward in a given period (usually a year). The Communication Operational Plan 2012 should be a short document (2-4 pages) that lists each communication activity that will be undertaken to achieve communications strategy objectives for 2012 month-by-month.

What is a communications activity plan?

For each activity in the communication operational plan (for example producing an annual report, producing a newsletter, updating the website) there should be a **communication activity plan** (1-2 pages) setting out in detail the objective, what has to be done, when it has to be done by, who will do it and what it will cost.

These detailed Communication Activity (or Implementation) Plans mean you can make sure everything that is needed (for example for a workshop) is done on time. You use it to track progress, and when the activity has been completed, to assess (1) what was done and how well it was done, (2) how successful the communication was, and (3) how you can do things better the next time.

Section Three: Review of documents

The documents we reviewed contain useful material for developing the NGF communication strategy (see Annex One for an outline for developing a communication strategy) within the framework of the KM Initiative (see Annex Two).

Situation analysis

The document with the file title *Nigeria_Governors'_Forum_Strategic_Plan[1]* contains useful material for the Situation Analysis, which is the first section of a Communication Strategy:

The NGF communication strategy will further NGF Strategic Objective 6 (Page 8, box, dot points 2, 3 and 4).

The document with the file title *Nigeria Governor's Forum Framework v Final Draft 27 March 2011[1]* will help identify communication activities that have been completed and those still outstanding (the current situation). You should determine whether or not the tasks outstanding are priorities, are achievable and have been allocated sufficient resources to complete them.

To flesh out the situation analysis, you also need to assess what NGF is currently doing in communications (through a communication audit). This could take the form of an informal survey covering for example:

Internal communications

- What communications have been sent to governors (governors' offices) over the past 12 months? (Information from distribution lists.)
- What communications have been sent to other groups of NGF staff (e.g. NGF Directors, NGF Directors' Personal Assistants) over the past 12 months? (E.g. Information from distribution lists.)
- Where are copies of the original documents filed? In what filing cabinets or computers? Where are these? Who has control or custody of these?
- What documents are most frequently requested? By whom?
- Who develops the most-used documents?
- Who has custody of the most-used documents?
- Who is responsible for distributing the most-used documents? Etc.

External communications

- What communications (e.g. press releases, reports, events) have been produced and distributed and to whom over the last 12 months? Gather similar information to that for internal communication.
- What were the main messages reported in the media about the NGF over the last 12 months?
- What was the communication budget for the last 12 months?
- What was the full-time staff equivalent involved in communications for the last 12 months?

From this assessment you will be able to determine what works well in communications and should be continued, what doesn't work and should be abandoned, what isn't being done and should be done, and what might hamper good NGF communications. You can summarise your findings in the form of a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis.

Communication goal and objectives

The second section of a communication strategy sets out the communications goal and objectives. Currently NGF Strategic Objective 6 (*Nigeria_Governors'_Forum_Strategic_Plan[1]*, Page 8, box, dot points 2, 3 and 4) sets out the following **communication goal**:

- Effective two-way communication with all NGF's stakeholders;

and the communication objectives:

- Stakeholders are aware of the role of NGF;
- Stakeholders are aware of the contribution the NGF is making to national development and good governance;
- The image of the forum is enhanced at all levels; and
- Reports are produced for publication.

However, these short statements aren't really specific enough to push a strong communications strategy forwards. From these short statements, therefore, you should develop SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely) communication objectives.

From our review of the three documents it appears that the resources for communication in NGF may be limited. We believe, therefore, you will not be able to undertake communication activities for all the strategic goals and objectives you indicate in any one year given the current resources. It is better to set yourself fewer tasks and complete all to a high standard than it is to set oneself many overambitious tasks which aren't completed to the standards necessary to have a real impact.

The communications team should also be aware that senior managers outside the team will have a tendency to set over ambitious goals and tasks. Part of a communication's manager's job should be to guide them and stop them overextending the strategy.

We therefore recommend determining key strategic concerns for the NGF for 2012 and focusing communication in these areas. The strategic focus on communicating key concerns both internally and externally will result in 'joined-up' communications that convey consistent strong messages:

Internal communication. Establish and maintain strong internal communication serving governors (priority audience) on key concerns that NGF intends to pursue in 2012. Such internal communications tools could include backgrounders, policy briefs, and updates (for example SMSs on policy progress) etc.

External communication. Establish and maintain good media relations (priority audience and channel to broader audiences). Such work should involve starting a media contact database, developing media backgrounders on key issues for 2012 (using material from backgrounders for governors), choosing spokespersons (governors) who can talk to the media on key issues and providing them with briefings (for example frequently asked questions and answers to these).

External communication. Hold three events on three key concerns for NGF in 2012.

If you are successful in these areas you will show what communications can achieve when done strategically. Success will generate support for more resources for communication in future years.

Communication activities (leading to outputs)

The *Nigeria_Governors'_Forum_Strategic_Plan[1]* also sets out the following key outputs (you will not be able to deliver all these at once) for communications activities (Page 9, box, points 6c, 6d, 6e and 6f):

- Information systems in place and working. (You will not be able to put all systems in place at once. You could start with the system indicated in item 1 above.)
- Feedback mechanisms in place, functioning and being monitored.

- Reports on key public policy issues published. (This depends on others writing the reports. When the completed reports are provided to you, have them edited, rewritten or summarised to suit the target audience, and then publish them appropriately.)
- Events for discussing and debating national policy.

Time will need to be taken to specify each of the outputs chosen for 2012 in detail, the activities needed to produce the outputs, the costs and schedules. The box on page 11 of the plan, points 6.5, 6.6, 6.7, 6.8, 6.9 and 6.12 indicates some of the activities that may be involved in producing the outputs.

Each activity should have its activity plan. For example the activity to “establish good relations with the media” might involve developing a protocol for press releases, developing a media contacts database that tracks which media releases were sent to which journalists, and includes a facility for recording who reported what and whether or not the coverage conveyed the message appropriately).

Likewise, the output “Events for discussing and debating national policy” would mean an activity plan for selecting the three priority issues for the year as topics for the events, convening an event organising committee, producing activity plans for each event, holding weekly meetings of the organising committee etc.

Using activity plans of these kinds will allow you to assign staff time and set budgets in order to ensure that work is done, and that the strategy you develop is actually applied.


Operational plan

The NGF Communications **Operational Plan** 2012 should:


- Set out the list of communication activities chosen for the operational period to achieve specific achievable communication objectives regarding the key concerns that the NGF aims to address in 2012
- Define, for each activity, the target audience category or categories and develop a contact database of the individuals in each category. This will take time. Start with priority target audiences for 2012. The category journalists should list details for all the key journalists in various media to be targeted, for example. (In succeeding years, the people in all the audience categories in *Nigeria Governor's Forum Framework v Final Draft 27 March 2011[1]* (page 13, 14) need to be identified and their contact details entered into the database.)

NGF communications activities should be planned according to a 4-step methodical approach:


1 Establish purpose: Communications goals and key messages. (*What* needs to be communicated and *why?*)



2 Define audiences: Analyse and segment audiences. (*To whom?*)



3 Implementation: Select appropriate communication products and channels of communication. (*How and when?*)



4 Monitor results. Have the messages gone home?

Annex One: Outline for an NGF communication strategy

From experience, we find that the following provide a good framework for a strong communications strategy.

Situation analysis. Sets the scene for the strategy. Provides a brief, clear and focused overview of the context, including challenges which NGF faces with key stakeholders which are critical for achievement of overall objectives. It should identify issues in a three-to-five year timeframe.

Overview

- NGF organisational objectives three-to-five years
- Key stakeholders (may be internal and/or external) relevant to achieving NGF objectives
- Key concerns for the year ahead (2012). Limit to three issues.

Communications challenges. Describes the major communication challenges or needs facing NGF.

[Note: we often recommend putting the two sections above in a separate report – so that the communication strategy only consists of the sections outlined below. That makes it a very short, goal driven tool. To be really effective, your communications strategy should be short (8 pages maximum), so that you can regularly review it.]

Stakeholders (audiences). Identifies NGF key stakeholder groups, explains their position in relation to NGF and what level of interaction NGF has with each group. The stakeholder table on page 13 and 14 of the *Nigeria Governor's Forum Framework v Final Draft 27 March 2011[1]* is a good start on this exercise. The 'Audience' column lists the main groups. The 'Interest' column describes the interactions NGF wants with each group. The 'Key messages' column sets out the key messages for each group. The 'Channels' column sets out how NGF could reach these groups.

Communications objectives. Sets out exactly what the communication programme must achieve over the coming year (2012). Communication objectives should be guided by NGF objectives for three key issues in 2012 and should be SMART.

Activities. Sets out the priority activities for the communication operational plan (2012). Examples: press release protocol, media contacts database, backgrounders for the media and/or governors. Month-by-month schedule of activities.

Benchmarks and evaluation. Key milestones (performance indicators) to measure and evaluate progress.

Resources. The human and financial resources that are available to carry out planned activities.

It is important to note that a Communications Strategy does not just help in advance planning; it is also an important tool for the reactive communications that make up a large part of everyday communication – responding to internal NGF requests and other requests for information as well as for writing press releases, briefs and so on.

You should familiarise yourself with the contents of the plan so that when you are asked to provide information or communicate in some way, you can repeat the key messages. This will help you

weave clear and consistent messages into all communications. Reiterating and reinforcing messages will have a strong cumulative effect when informing and influencing key individuals.

Annex Two: NGF Knowledge Management Initiative

The following briefly indicates how NGF's communications strategy will support the NGF KM Initiative. Reviewing this will help you develop a robust communications strategy for NGF.

What the NGF communication strategy should aim to do

The NGF communication strategy should aim to:

- Set communications goals and associated sets of key messages which will support the strategic objectives of NGF with its various audiences;
- Provide a framework and methodology for analysing, designing and implementing communications activities which support KM;
- Identify sources of assistance and access to resources for communication activities;
- Maintain a high quality, consistent, coherent style and "feel" to all NGF KM communications outputs;
- Ensure the development of a set of protocols for communications which assure the content, direction and approval of communications products;
- Enable coordination and consistency with other NGF strategies.

NGF KM framework

The *Nigeria Governor's Forum Framework v Final Draft 27 March 2011*^[1] sets the overall framework for communications work within the KM Initiative. It includes communications goals, key messages and categories (segments) of the audiences that NGF will have to target to achieve its objectives.

Derived from this framework, there are **KM quarterly work plans**, which lay out the activities to deliver the outputs and indicators of performance.

NGF KM workplans

April-June 2011

The document *Nigeria Governor's Forum Framework v Final Draft 27 March 2011*^[1] sets out the timeframe and activities for the NGF Knowledge Management Initiative for April-June 2011. Specific communication activities mentioned in this workplan are: (i) Develop a KM/Communication Action plan; (ii) Develop KM/Communication Framework and share a summary for stakeholders' inputs; (iii) Develop internal and external KM/Communication guidelines and policies and share with staff for adherence; (iv) Take part in regular discussion programmes on TV, Radio and Social Network Internet Platforms/Sites; (v) Provide weekly updates on the website; (vi) Update the NGF website to be more interactive and resourceful.

A review of these activities (completed, in progress, abandoned, outcomes) should be part of the communications audit.

September 2011-February 2012

The document *NGF KM work plan phase I* sets out the timeframe and activities for the NGF Knowledge Management Initiative for September 2011-February 2012. Specific communication activities mentioned in this workplan are:

November 2011:

Activity	Person responsible		Input	Output	Objective
	Lead	Support			
Develop the NGF KM Communication Strategy (draft)	KM Consultant	SPARC, NGF	NGF KM audience segmentation	KM Communications strategy	

December 2011:

Activity	Person responsible		Input	Output	Objective
	Lead	Support			
Develop internal and external KM/Communication guidelines and policies and share with staff for adherence.	KM Consultant	Develop internal and external KM/Communication guidelines and policies and share with staff for adherence.			Reports produced and distributed to their target audiences
Develop Feedback Tools for meetings and events	KM Consultant	EDRS, EDFA	Report of findings and recommendations, best practices	Templates Minutes Memos Reports Newsletters Etc Communication policies, Communication channels	

A review of these activities (completed, in progress, abandoned, outcomes) should be part of the communications audit.

