

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN THE AGE OF DECENTRALISATION AND PRIVATISATION OF RURAL SERVICES: LESSONS FROM TWO AFRICAN EXPERIENCES

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Abstract

This paper describes the challenges of decentralisation and privatisation of rural services from the perspective of communication strategy development. The wave of decentralisation and privatisation in rural services worldwide creates challenges for rural communities, service providers and local governments. Local organisations – both in government and civil society – are confronted with rules and procedures that are unprecedented. The new roles require significant changes in attitudes, skills, and especially a new level of accountability. While communication strategies are only a part of the transformation, they are strategic tools that merit attention. This is an account of two cases where the authors have been involved in developing communication strategies aimed specifically at helping stakeholders make this transition. The first is the case of the Communication and Information Strategy for the National Agricultural Advisory Services Programme (NAADS) of Uganda. The second is the formulation of a plan to communicate the National Water Policy (NWP) and Rural Water Transition Plan in Mozambique. The paper concludes with some design principles for other strategies and with a review of the importance of communication research and planning.

Research findings

- *Communication for Development has different, complementary functions – it goes well beyond ‘public relations’.*
- *A communication and information strategy will address human resource development goals, organisational performance and field implementation. Specialised skills in planning and managing the strategies are increasingly important.*
- *Audience research is a basic starting point to learn about what stakeholders already know, what communication channels they can access, and what media combinations respond to those channels.*
- *The development of a communication strategy follows basic design principles that have been distilled from practice.*

Policy implications

- *Effective development needs planned communication.*
- *Privatisation and decentralisation of rural services imply fundamental changes in skills, attitudes and relationships; communication strategies can help articulate the transition.*
- *Communication action needs to be research-based and planned.*
- *There are no blueprints to make the transition toward decentralised, demand-driven services, but communication can help develop strategies to identify who needs what, where and how – to a large extent a communication strategy works like a management audit by highlighting challenges and providing solutions.*
- *There is a need for continuity in the staff involved in the formulation of a communication strategy and its implementation – if this is not possible, the tendency is for agencies to tender out the implementation and lose the capacity to manage and adapt a strategy as conditions evolve.*

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Acronyms

AKIS	Agricultural Knowledge and Information Systems
AMIS	Agricultural Market Information System
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DAR	Rural Water Department Mozambique
DATIC	District Agricultural Training and Information Centre, Uganda
DPOPH/DAS	Provincial Civil Works Department / Water and Sanitation Department, Inhambane, Mozambique
DNA	National Directorate of Water, Mozambique
DRA	Demand-responsive Approach, Mozambique
LC	Local Councils, part of the system of Local Government, Uganda
MIS	Market Information System, NAADS, Uganda
NAADS	National Agricultural Advisory Services Programme, Uganda
NWP	National Water Policy, Mozambique
PMA	Programme for the Modernisation of Agriculture, Uganda
TOT	Training of Trainers

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN THE AGE OF DECENTRALISATION AND PRIVATISATION OF RURAL SERVICES: LESSONS FROM TWO AFRICAN EXPERIENCES

1 INTRODUCTION

The wave of decentralisation and privatisation in rural services worldwide creates challenges for rural communities, service providers and local governments. The delegation of administrative and programme delivery mandates is often associated with diminished resources; in other words a double shock to the system. Local organisations – both in government and civil society – are confronted with rules and procedures that are unprecedented. Relationships from the past and patterns of governance – good and bad – are suddenly brushed aside. What makes the transition especially difficult is that few resources are allocated to help the stakeholders appreciate the change and take control of the transition. In developing countries the new policies are particularly difficult to put into practice as resources are scarce. Most critically, resources to fund the transition and make different stakeholders aware of the steps required to change roles and attitudes tend to be limited.

This is an account of two cases where the authors have been involved in developing communication strategies aimed specifically at helping stakeholders make this transition. The first is the case of the Communication and Information Strategy for the National Agricultural Advisory Services Programme (NAADS) of Uganda, a new demand-driven programme in agricultural extension. The second is the Communication Strategy for the *Plano de Transição para Água Rural*, the transition plan for the new rural water programme implemented by the *Departamento de Água Rural*, the Rural Water Department in Mozambique. In both instances, funding was allocated for the development of communication strategies to enable all affected groups to learn and understand the new policies, and explore the consequences in terms of the new relationships and roles that they are now expected to assume in the context of demand-driven approaches for rural development.

Change in roles

The decentralisation of services and privatisation are two forces that have been introduced into the developing world as conditions for bilateral assistance and multilateral financial support. Some governments have dedicated significant resources to studying the performance of privatised systems in other countries. In the case of Uganda, the new extension approach is a mosaic of experiences collected from a list of countries including Chile, New Zealand and Denmark. In Mozambique, the National Water Policy (NWP) is

derived from 'best practices' approved by the international donor community around the issues of water service delivery. Services that were publicly funded since independence – such as the drilling of bore holes, the installation of water pumps, and the delivery of agricultural and animal extension – have in a matter of a few years been radically transformed. Extension workers have been let go from the public service, often with training and financial incentives to establish themselves as private consultants. Companies that were clients of local government now have to compete for open bids to provide technical services. Rural communities are now (at least on paper) given a power they have never before enjoyed. In the case of Uganda, farmer fora have been created at the sub-county and district level and funds are being transferred directly to them to contract out advisory services. The sub-county fora are now responsible for: contracting service providers, technology development, and capacity building in participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation. Those fora need clear information on the NAADS procedures, training and confidence to take on these tasks. In Mozambique, communities used to being 'passive recipients' of government services are now required to take a decisive and active role in both paying for and maintaining their water systems. This transition is a complex process, one where many stakeholders are unaware of the enormous challenges involved in re-engineering the institutions involved.

These new roles require significant change in attitudes, skills, and accountability. While communication strategies are only a part of the transformation, they are strategic tools that merit attention. The design of communication strategies entails a level of analysis that resembles an audit: procedures and relationships are analysed in detail, often revealing challenges and contradictions unforeseen by central administrators, let alone politicians (see Mozambique). There is already evidence of the range and complexity of the challenges that managers of demand-based extension systems face (Lightfoot, 2003; Kidd et al., 2000). These details can make or break the performance of the new approaches, especially in their pilot stages. Of particular importance is the development of support systems to develop new skills, encourage new attitudes and give people the motivation to take on new roles. These changes take time. As a senior decision-maker in Uganda observed after a visit to Denmark: 'It took Denmark 100 years to transform its agricultural extension system – NAADS

Table 1 The changes in roles faced by major stakeholder groups

Stakeholders	Past roles	Present requirements
Rural communities	Passive receivers of services	Articulate demands, specify contracts, participate in allocation of contracts
Service providers in agriculture	Publicly-funded civil servants hired as extension workers	Private advisors competing for bids for publicly-funded technical assistance contracts
Service providers in water	Drilling operators on contract with different levels of government	Drilling operators competing for bids for publicly-funded contracts
Local government	By passed by national policies, at times able to direct funds to contractors	Involved in brokering contracts between communities and service providers, including conflict management

will do it in Uganda in only 25 years'. Table 1 shows how each stakeholder group is now faced with fundamental changes.

2 CHANGE MANAGEMENT: A FERTILE CHALLENGE FOR COMMUNICATION

Policy-makers who are faced with managing this transition are often ill-prepared to coordinate the change at the field and organisational level, while at the same time containing the pressure at the political and donor level. Work at the field level requires time and motivation, while politicians will continue to press for quick results and will underestimate the complexity of the task at hand. The transition is challenging as it entails new perspectives, new assumptions and fundamentally different worldviews (see Table 1).

One of the implications of this shift is the emphasis on participation, consultation, listening and training. In making the shift natural resource management organisations cannot 'go at it alone'; they need new policies, new disciplines, new linkages, and new staff expertise. The following process skills are needed to facilitate a more people-centred approach:

- ability to involve people in decision-making;
- ability to access people's views;
- ability to facilitate multi-stakeholder dialogue;
- ability to build capacity and understanding;
- ability to listen to others and share ideas;
- ability to ensure participation through sharing of knowledge, ideas, enhancement of debate and feedback.

Strategic Communication, Development Communication or *Communication for Development* are the terms communication professionals use to indicate planned communication strategies applied to development programmes or projects. When we talk about *Communication* we are referring to a planned communication approach that can support a range of programme implementation needs through several complementary functions. We stress the word *planned* to emphasise the importance of being proactive in plotting out carefully constructed communication inputs to enhance programme/project implementation.

'Communication for development is the use of communication processes, techniques and media to help people towards a full awareness of their situation and their options for change, to resolve conflicts, to work towards consensus, to help people plan actions

for change and sustainable development, to help people acquire the knowledge and skills they need to improve their condition and that of society, and to improve the effectiveness of institutions' (Fraser and Restrepo-Estrada, 1998).

3 COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

The communication strategies developed in both our sample countries included the following steps:

- the development of a list of themes or issues to be communicated;
- an understanding of the *context* within which the communication takes place;
- identification of possible partners or allies for building the communication process.

In both cases, the process began with rapid audience analysis with different groups in rural areas (districts) to learn about their communication patterns and understanding of the change that was about to be put in place:

- what they knew about the new policies and approaches;
- what media channels they preferred and could afford to use;
- who were their trusted sources and disseminators of information;
- the differences between men's and women's preferred times to listen to radio;
- what feedback mechanisms existed for communities to respond and voice concerns;
- what training was needed at all levels.

Subsequent to the audience research, the individual communication strategies were developed to respond to the above context and audience preferences. A range of communication products in different and complementary media were developed to enable communities to appreciate the new procedures, voice their concerns about them, and define the training they needed in order to assume the new roles.

Communication functions

A communication strategy includes several complementary communication functions. Those deemed important for this type of change are summarised in Table 2 (in which the first three functions are borrowed from Röling, 1994) along with examples of possible stakeholders to initiate each action and some broad indicators of success.

Table 2 Communication functions and their attributes

Communication function	Purposes	Initiator	Evidence of success
Policy communication: managing the external environment	Making policies, programmes, and the evolving procedures known	Government agency	Stakeholders demonstrate awareness by applying procedures or suggesting modifications to them
Educational communication: making things known, sharing knowledge	Making technical know-how accessible to increase knowledge about the production, transformation, organisation and marketing dimensions of agriculture; including price information. Worldwide there is a trend towards a closer engagement by farmers in the technology development and adaptation process in contrast with the conventional role of passive receiver of extension messages	Service providers and farmers (with training on accessing content and transforming it)	Service providers are able to seek and find information sources and repackage materials for farmer learning. Farmers adopt practices or reject them knowledgeably; farmers utilise communication methods and media to enhance farmer-to-farmer linkages
Social or facilitative communication: Platforms for participation and debate	Providing platforms for stakeholders to exchange perspectives, explore new ideas and programmes, appreciate differences of opinions, negotiate common goals, develop partnerships, propose changes to programmes and become confident participants able to articulate needs and opinions	Farmers' groups, district authorities, service providers, and local groups/organisations	Stakeholders participate, become empowered, take action, and take ownership of the programme
Time-sensitive communication	Keeping in touch with family, prices and weather*	Anybody, especially those with access to a public pay phone or cellular phone	The private sector expands infrastructure to respond to growing rural demand; rural projects and the private sector find ways to provide time-sensitive agricultural, health and educational content in a cost-effective manner
Communication for learning	Listening actively; inviting feedback for course correction	Government organisation	The organisation adjusts procedures on the basis of field experiences and keeps stakeholders informed about the changes and process for future evolution

* The business case for many telecentres and for all private telephone operators is based on the willingness of all their clients to pay for phone calls and services. It is the demand for phone services that drives the expansion of rural and remote telecommunications infrastructure.

These functions are practical building blocks in the design of a communication strategy. In the following section we demonstrate how they were integrated into the Uganda and Mozambique cases.

4 CASE STUDY – UGANDA

The National Agricultural Advisory Service of Uganda (NAADS) is guided by a vision, mission and strategy agreed on by its stakeholders. The Communication and Information Strategy, adapted (Ramirez, 2003) was built on this foundation.

NAADS's vision is based on 'a decentralised, farmer-owned and private sector service extension system contributing to the realisation of the agricultural sector objectives'.

Its mission is: *'To increase farmer access to information, knowledge and technology for profitable agricultural production.'* (www.naads.or.ug/)

The strategic changes through which NAADS expects to achieve its aims are:

- shifting from public to private delivery of advisory services in the first five-year phase;

- empowering subsistence farmers to access private extension services, technologies and market information;
- developing private sector capacity and professional capability to supply agricultural services;
- promoting market-orientated farming (farming as a business);
- creating options for financing and delivery of appropriate advisory and technical services for different farmer types;
- stimulating private-sector funding for agricultural advisory services.

Institutionally, NAADS is grounded on farmers' groups at sub-county level. The groups are integrated, through representation, at farmers' fora with a hierarchy that has its base in the parish and ascends through the sub-county, district and ultimately the national level. The fora approve the plans and service contracts. For these organisations to take on an active role in NAADS, there are various issues that need attention. These became apparent during the design phase of the communication strategy:

- *The NAADS message is not simple.* There was evidence from all levels that it needed to become better known. Each target audience needed specific messages to appreciate how NAADS could become relevant to them. Special attention had to be paid to stories with examples about how NAADS was evolving, addressing different challenges, and learning from them.
- *Build on existing communication activities.* There were already communication activities at the district and sub-county level that NAADS could build on: Local FM stations were offering radio phone-ins and competitions; some organisations were producing media for local use (newsletters sold at parish level); and some were using group communication methods (groups of farmer listening to cassette tapes). NAADS could find ways to enhance those activities, taking care not to compete with them or undermine their sustainability.
- *Women and men prefer different communication channels, and these preferences vary across districts and sub-counties.* However some common patterns do exist. The field work confirmed that men prefer national actors and linkages whereas women tend not to. Women put more trust in contacts within the parish and sub-county level, with less reliance than men on formal/official channels, and they favour educational radio programmes in the evening after their chores are done. This has financial implications as some of the FM stations charge a premium price for broadcasting during the evening prime time slots.
- *In two cases we observed a contrast in terms of the number and types of communication channels accessed by farmers' fora at the sub-county level versus farmers' groups at the parish level.* NAADS needed to be aware of these situations as decisions by a farmers' forum on which activities to continue or discontinue may not always correspond with the real needs of the farmers' groups. For example, in one case the farmers' forum had decided to discontinue sensitisation activities as they were perceived as costly, while the sub-county stakeholders felt there was still a need for them.
- *It so happened that the 2003 NAADS calendar included many photos from Soroti District.* Not surprisingly, we witnessed an enormous interest in these calendars on the part of people at the sub-county level in Soroti when they found photos of themselves, their friends and their farms in the calendars. This suggested that more emphasis should be placed on producing NAADS's printed materials locally. Increased local content may outweigh some loss in quality of paper when people are eager to see familiar farming systems and faces.
- *The methodology used during the district visits to do a rapid audience analysis allowed some of the NAADS district coordinators to get a taste of the basic steps in communication planning.* NAADS needed to find ways to engage the other district coordinators in the same learning process by engaging them in similar field exercises.
- *Radio and other farmers emerge as major*

communication channels, followed by brochures and newspapers which are of limited use where illiteracy rates are high, but remain relevant.

The NAADS Communication and Information Strategy responds to the above through six blocks or pillars of activities. Table 3 provides the overall summary of Pillars, Objectives and Outputs. Each pillar works as the rationale for a number of Objectives and associated Outputs. Each Output is further elaborated through an additional table that addresses message design, audiences and media combinations (Table 4). This paper provides details on the planning for two selected Outputs: district calendars and radio programmes (Tables 5 and 6).

Pillar 1: Strategic targeting of messages and audiences; use of stories to convey relevance

Making NAADS known is a challenge, especially at the sub-county level and below. Policy communication needs to address specific audiences with messages designed to address particular changes in attitude and knowledge. Each and every piece of NAADS communication material – be it a brochure, radio spot or website – needs to be designed according to the basic communication planning steps. The two dimensions, strategic communication and the use of stories, complement each other well. We all learn best from stories.¹ NAADS will become relevant when real-life situations are communicated and, as a result, people have something concrete to do or plan for.

This pillar addresses policy communication through strategic planning and stories. Policy communication needs to become strategic in terms of defining specific audiences and messages and utilising stories as examples that people can relate to.

Specific objectives for NAADS are that it should:

- make its programme relevant to all interested stakeholders;
- ensure its mechanisms and procedures are known, especially how they evolve;
- make its learning process known, especially the mechanisms for listening to feedback;
- make its progress known, especially the sequencing of events.

This pillar is one of the top priorities in the strategy and includes 15 different outputs. Table 4 lists the proposed media outputs to be coordinated by the NAADS Secretariat in Kampala (other tables outline district-level activities).

Each of the outputs was further detailed through its own table. What is important here is the notion that each output can be monitored. Table 5 provides the example of calendars to be produced at district level.

At the time of writing (one year since the Strategy was developed), the NAADS secretariat reported on the production of policy briefs for Members of Parliament (Output 10); the NAADS News was coming out more regularly (Output 1); and seven more flyers for farmers had been developed and printed (Output 5). Also, plans were underway to produce a book of stories in conjunction with District Information Officers.²

Table 3 The objectives of the NAADS Communication and Information Strategy

Pillar	Objective	Outputs (Secretariat)	Outputs (Districts)
1 Strategic targeting of messages and audiences; use of stories to convey relevance	Make the NAADS programme relevant to all interested stakeholders.	Outputs 1.1 – 1.8 and 1.10 – 1.15	Outputs 2.1, 2.3 – 2.5, 2.7
	Make the NAADS mechanisms and procedures known, especially how they evolve.		
	Make the NAADS learning process known, especially the mechanisms for listening to feedback.		
2 Active listening to give audiences a voice	Make the NAADS progress known, especially the sequencing of events.	Output 1.7 and 1.8	Output 2.2
	Enable all stakeholders to contact NAADS by affordable means (through radio phone-ins, writing letters, and in the future through free-phone lines to a call-centre) to ask questions, explore the challenges, understand the implementation arrangements and begin taking ownership of the programme.		
3 NAADS champions or local points of presence	Identify local champions* through competitions and support them in becoming 'NAADS Points of Presence' at the sub-county, parish and village level.		Outputs 2.6 and 2.7
4. Enabling service providers to become agricultural information providers	Provide training for service providers, farmers and NAADS staff on accessing agricultural information sources and on communication methods and media skills. Pioneer multi-stakeholder workshops where farmers, service providers, agricultural technology providers, researchers and other information intermediaries can explore ways to collaborate and identify their transaction costs, training needs and common interests.	Outputs 1.16 – 1.18, as well as 1.7	Output 2.8
5. Strategic targeting of market information	Provide reliable market information to assist farmers in reducing the risks associated with marketing.	Implementation through the MIS Strategy	
	Empower farmers to bargain for fairer prices and decide where and when to sell their produce.		
6. Internal information management and learning system	Develop responsibility charts for staff teams as a basis on which to decide who needs to be informed about each activity.	Objectives 11– 12 to be defined in consultation with the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit.	
	Design electronic file sharing procedures and directory structure with staff involvement: start with what exists, experiment with file-sharing pilots.		
	Pilot a monthly newsletter as a means to inform all staff within the Secretariat and selected partners about programme evolution and progress.		

* 'Champions' are natural communicators with a community commitment, e.g. teachers, health workers, prominent farmers, religious leaders, local shopkeepers, community development workers, local theatre groups, etc. It is important to emphasise that the word 'champions' as it is used here refers to their advocacy role, not to winning a competition. The relevant definition in the Oxford dictionary is: 'a person who fights for, or speaks in support of, a group of people or a belief'. The fact that there is more than one meaning provides scope for confusion which emphasises the need to find a more appropriate term in local languages.

Source: The NAADS Communication and Information Work Plan, Vol. II, 2003

Table 6 shows how radio, a medium highlighted by many farmers as their most preferred communication channel, is being used.

At the time of writing NAADS reported that some radio programmes had been produced and that more than eight radio stations were airing weekly 30-minute educational broadcasts across the country as well as a fortnightly interactive call-in programme.

Pillar 2: Active listening to give audiences a voice

The NAADS message (programme) is difficult to communicate because it calls for significant change in roles and attitudes, plus new skills and new relationships. People need the opportunity to confront the information being offered and respond to it. Radio call-ins are already a familiar means to do this, and as

Table 4 Proposed media outputs to make NAADS known

Output No.	Messages	Target audiences	Media products	Frequency	Cost* USh million
1.1	Lessons learned; progress on components; stories; NAADS is making itself known.	Donors; districts; NGOs; policy-makers; board	Newsletter (4)	Quarterly	104
1.2	Lessons learned in six old districts	Donors; districts; NGOs; policy-makers; Board	Video documentary	One production per year	31.7
1.3	Contracting; farmers' institutions and fora	Donors	Mini documentary	Two per year	4.4
1.4	I am connected with NAADS; I know about NAADS; Local photos and stories (see Table 5 for more details)	Farmers' groups and fora, sub-county and district coordinators; Policy-makers; donors; LCs	Calendars (district and secretariat)	One per year	21.3
1.5	Seven issues: What NAADS does and what it does not do What is a farmer's group under the NAADS? A guide on enterprise selection How can NGOs/CBOs participate in the NAADS? Who is a service provider? How to do farming as a business How to run a small-scale producer's group	Service providers; coordinators; subject matter specialists	New flyers	As required (seven topics so far)	20
1.6	NAADS procedures	Farmers' groups and fora; service providers and local government	Old flyers	As required by expansion	16
1.7	(Detailed in a separate work plan: see Table 6)		Radio programme	Weekly for three months	54
1.8	Feb '03 menu for the website: • What is NAADS and what it does • Organisation • Programme implementation • Reports • Funding • News / events • Publications • Opportunities in NAADS • Feedback • Useful links • Contact us	Donors; districts; NGOs; policy-makers; board; urban professionals; consultants; service providers; NAADS coordinators	Website	Ongoing	
1.9	Coordination; monthly work plans; schedules; meetings	NAADS coordinators	Phone; fax; email; monthly e-newsletter	Continuous; monthly	
1.10	The NAADS is 1) a part of PMA; 2) about farmer empowerment; 3) private delivery of extension	Members of Parliament (MPs); policy-makers	Policy brief	Once or twice per year	8
1.11	Become an ambassador: take NAADS back to your home	Urban professionals	Newspaper insert	Once or twice per year	
1.12	NAADS is organised and is communicating	NAADS Board of Directors	Package of communication materials	Quarterly	32
1.13	NAADS is present	From policy-makers all the way to farmers; schools	NAADS sponsorships of partners' posters; radio spots; school books, etc.	Case-by-case	
1.14	NAADS taking root	From policy-makers all the way to farmers	Booklet of stories	One per year	
1.15	I associate myself with NAADS	Donors; GoU policy-makers; evaluators	Hats; t-shirts; bags	Yearly and target specific events	

* US\$1 = 1900 Ugandan Shillings

Table 5 Output 1.4 – district calendars

Key messages	I am connected to NAADS; I know about NAADS local photos and stories
Target audience	Farmers' groups and fora; sub-county and district coordinators; policy-makers; donors; LCs
Material(s)	District calendars
How is it used?	Display
Where is it produced?	Photos and stories gathered from districts; Kampala contract for layout and printing
How is it tested?	Draft versions tested by district coordinators
Distribution	In districts, some copies distributed in Kampala
How do we gauge impact?	Requests for more copies; more copies; Feedback on content Feedback from districts on number of copies
On what basis do we budget?	18.8M: 15 districts x 250 copies/each x 5000 unit cost

the practice becomes further engrained it may lay the foundation for other options such as a call-in centre. This facility could operate at national, district and sub-county levels.

This pillar addresses Facilitative or Social Communication to give people the opportunity to confront and discuss information that may otherwise not become meaningful; it is an important complement to Policy Communication. It also reflects Time-Sensitive Communication in that it seeks to use phones as a

channel for people to interact with NAADS through radio call-ins.

Its specific objectives are to enable all stakeholders to contact NAADS by affordable means (through radio phone-ins, letters, and in the future via freephone lines to a call centre) to ask questions, explore the challenges, understand the implementation arrangements and begin taking ownership of the programme.

Pillar 3: NAADS champions or local points of presence

Understanding of the NAADS programme can be accomplished through several combined inputs: stories of real-life situations, access to factual information about NAADS, and having trusted people with whom to talk about the programme, preferably face-to-face rather than by phone. This pillar also addresses Facilitative or Social Communication. It calls for two-way communication channels to give people the opportunity to ask questions and get answers. The NAADS message is complex and people need an opportunity to confront and discuss information about it so that they may learn the rationale and begin to appreciate the potential of the programme. The message may otherwise not become meaningful. This is an important complement to Policy Communication as well as to the second pillar, although this one happens locally, face-to-face with some known, trusted person at the village, parish or sub-county level.

Its specific objectives are to identify local champions through competitions and support them in becoming 'NAADS points of presence' at the sub-county, parish and village levels.

Table 6 Details of output 1.7 – radio

Key messages	Standard NAADS radio programmes prepared by CBS (matched by content of the brochures)	As left	NAADS (what it does and does not do)NAADS; a forum or mouthpiece addressing questions and concerns as written / called in support media (inserts, TV shows, etc.)
Target audience	Farmers' groups and service providers	As left	Urban decision-makers, professionals
Material(s)	Production of 4–11 radio programmes, 10–15 min. each	Airing of 4–11radio programmes, 10–15 min. each	A range of short announcements, interviews; Radio One on call as needed by NAADS to record key interviews
How is it used?	Aired as part of 30 min. programme (as per CBS template) (see Vol 1 – Annex 11)	Aired as part of 30 min. programme (as per CBS template)	Aired during their commute times
Where is it produced?	Kampala; production at CBS	The CBS scripts are translated and adapted locally	Kampala, Radio One
How is it tested?	Focus group with farmers and with service providers	Focus group with farmers and with service providers	Focus group
Distribution	CBS broadcast; script sent to the FM stations that I collaborate with the districts	Airtime will be contracted by the NAADS District Coordinators and billed to the secretariat	Radio One broadcast
How do we gauge impact?	Change in knowledge and attitudes of target audience	Change in knowledge and attitudes of target audience	Listener call-ins
On what basis do we budget?	CBS contract figures	Broadcast airtime 300,000 for a 30 min. weekly prog /quarterly – 1,200,000 / district / year x 15 districts = 18M	Radio One contract figures

Note: CBS and Radio One are commercial radio stations

Pillar 4: Enabling service providers to become agricultural information providers

Ensuring that service providers and farmers' organisations have these skills is part of the retooling mandate within NAADS and has important implications for improving the links with research. Service providers need not only the skills but also the confidence to interact with agricultural information providers and researchers to negotiate more relevant content and appropriate linking mechanisms. In essence, NAADS needs to empower the service providers to articulate the demand side of the agricultural knowledge and information system (AKIS).

This pillar addresses educational communication for sharing agricultural knowledge and information. It focuses a great deal of attention on training service providers and farmers' groups to search out and access information sources, and to use communication methods and skills to make that information relevant to their clients. Its specific objectives are to:

- provide training for service providers, farmers and NAADS staff to access agricultural information sources and communication methods, and acquire media skills;
- pioneer multi-stakeholder workshops where farmers, service providers, agricultural technology providers, researchers and other information intermediaries can explore ways to collaborate and identify their transaction costs, training needs and common interests.

As a direct follow-up to this pillar, in November 2003, a training of trainers' (TOT) workshop took place in Tororo District Agricultural Training and Information Centre (DATIC) with funding from the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) (Noble and Basilio, 2003). The workshop had the following objectives:

- to explain to participants and explore with them the potential of DATICS-NAADS collaboration in building capacities of stakeholders in the NAADS programme;
- to enumerate and discuss concepts and principles of a collaborative learning process and how this can be used to create flexible and adaptable information and communication strategies responsive to the diverse needs of NAADS stakeholders;
- to acquire skills to understand knowledge and information systems in order to develop demand-based communication and information strategies;
- to explore participants' knowledge and experience in seeking information and translating and packaging it into something that farmers can use;
- to explore participants' ability to analyse the effectiveness of different media in communicating information;
- to assess participants' ability to plan, manage and facilitate a workshop on information and communication;

The foundation for the TOT was a multi-stakeholder collaborative learning process to address complex issues, i.e. to build information and communication

skills to meet the challenges facing stakeholders in the NAADS programme. The objectives of the workshop were achieved by using this learning approach to address three broad issues:

- the nature of the current information and communication systems that support farmers and service providers in Tororo District and how these systems need to change in order to better serve these NAADS stakeholders;
- the challenges of creating communication and information strategies to meet the diverse needs of farmers and service providers;
- the challenges of translating, repackaging and communicating information for farmers.

Participants were given examples of NAADS terms of reference for service providers. They then began a first attempt at putting together a simple strategy framework showing the key components, activities and actors that might be involved. Table 7 shows an example of the control of banana weevils.

Pillar 5: Strategic targeting of market information

This pillar addresses educational communication for sharing agricultural knowledge and especially market information. The market information system's specific objectives were developed by a complementary project. They include:

Table 7 Components for a strategy on banana weevils

Information communication needs	How to control banana weevils
Communication actors responsible	Agricultural service providers
Communication objective	Within one year service providers will reach 50% of farmers in sub-country 'A' with effective information and communication on the control of banana weevils
Target audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary/agric. service providers • Secondary • District and lower LG • Agriculture officials • CDO/A, LC Councilors and leaders • CBOs
Message	Bananas are a major source of food and income. Control of weevils will effectively increase banana production outline message
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings • Village Workshops • Radio • Posters • Brochures • Field visits • Demonstrations etc.
Outcome indicators	Service providers will reach 50% of farmers with effective information and communication, leading to increased banana production
Collaborating partners and key players	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District and Lower Local Governments • Agricultural Research and Academic Institutions

- providing reliable market information to assist farmers in reducing the risks associated with marketing;
- empowering farmers to bargain for fairer prices and decide where and when to sell their produce.

Price information is one of three supply-side constraints to market access. A major additional challenge that has been identified has to do with the demand side: many farmers in Uganda do not fully understand how markets operate and how they can organise themselves to engage effectively in this new environment. NAADS recognises the need for market information to be packaged within an educational framework, such that farmers can use it most effectively.

'Market information is near to useless unless it can be analysed, interpreted and disseminated by/to farmers in a useable manner. As well as supplying farmers with timely, relevant market information, there is a need for greater intervention to educate/train farmers on basic home economics/supply and demand theory. With this training, farmers can be in a better position to utilise this knowledge more effectively. Market information is not solely about price. It includes other marketing facets which need to be disseminated including information on exchange rates, transport/taxes/tariff costs, volumes traded, quality assurance guidelines, weather forecasts, production and price projections of major staples. Specialist MIS organisations shall need to engage other partners in training and working with farmer groups' (NAADS, 2003).

Pillar 6: Internal information management and learning system

This pillar addresses communication for learning, and is geared towards helping NAADS improve its internal learning and information management. Three areas are highlighted as immediately relevant: document processing, staff responsibility charting, and internal information sharing. Its specific objectives are to:

- streamline document processing and cataloguing within the Secretariat;
- develop responsibility charts for staff teams as a basis on which to decide who needs to be informed about each activity;
- design electronic file-sharing procedures and directory structure with staff involvement: start with what exists, experiment with file-sharing pilots.

The six pillars have several interrelated activities, and together they provide NAADS with the basis for a work planning document with specific activities, verifiable indicators and budgetary guidelines.

5 CASE STUDY – MOZAMBIQUE³

The Government of Mozambique National Water Directorate (DNA) has invested considerable time and energy in establishing its National Water Policy (NWP) and preparing the ground for implementation through its Rural Water Transition Plan. With the assistance of the World Bank, DNA has also invested in institutional change at the national level and produced both Implementation and Operations manuals outlining strategic interventions for NWP implementation. As in

Uganda, the National Water Policy calls for substantial change particularly in the rural water sector. The Demand-Responsive Approach (DRA), for example, calls for a change in attitude, practice and behaviour from all stakeholders. Government agencies must move from being service providers (and in control) to learning to facilitate a system that works through the private sector down to the community level. Communities will no longer be passive recipients but must learn to demand and pay for services and become active participants in the supply and management of their own systems. A good programme will be determined by the people for whom it is intended, their level of involvement, awareness, participation and skills.

None of this change can take place without communication.

A look at the project cycle for a Demand-Responsive Approach to rural water and sanitation shows that there are entry points for communication at strategic points in every stage of the cycle. For example, communication inputs will be required to:

- raise general awareness about NWP in order to create a *climate of readiness*;
- facilitate demand (disseminate information on application process and criteria for selection) in districts selected for project inputs;
- facilitate communication between communities and local authorities (regular reports on status of rural water supply);
- facilitate communication between community leaders and community members;
- facilitate communication between Water Committee and community members (people's participation in all phases of cycle, collecting community contributions, reporting on status of water source, costs of repair, state of funds, promoting good practices);
- facilitate communication between districts, communities and the Provincial Civil Works Department/Water and Sanitation Department (DPOPH/DAS).

Communication needs for making the National Water Policy in Inhambane (the province where the communication strategy was developed) known and implementing it readily fall into the broad categories or functions already outlined in this paper. For example:

- *Communication information on policy and procedures*: Raise awareness (communicate) of the National Water Policy – its need, importance and rationale. Facilitate the adoption (buy-in) to its key guiding principles and explain the rules of the demand-responsive approach (and existing project). The villagers of Inhambane were accustomed to government agencies making all the decisions around safe water delivery. The delivery of 'safe' water was considered a government responsibility. Those communities lucky enough to have the ear of an influential politician were the ones likely to receive the services. The 'gift' of water was often an election promise.
- *Providing know-how* for skills development around water system management and on-going

maintenance. Communities would now be required not only to choose the level of water technology that they thought they could afford (local hand pump or house connection) but would also be expected to manage the technological on-going operation and maintenance requirements. The skill to do this had to be acquired.

- *Ensuring participation and training.* Train intermediaries to assist in their use of communication media for facilitating the participatory approach. As in Uganda, the old system of government-hired extension staff managing community liaison had been dropped. Government would now have to hire NGOs or private extension services to play the intermediary role.
- A fourth category, *Enhancing coordination* was also deemed important. The implementation of the demand-responsive approach requires coordination and collaboration amongst a variety of stakeholders: government water engineers; private sector contractors; NGOs or private extension workers; district and local government staff and community groups. It was clear that multi-stakeholder consultations and other communication methodologies had to be brought into play to facilitate this type of collaborative process.

A provincial communication strategy as a pilot

Fortunately, a few key individuals in DNA came to appreciate the importance of communication in the water sector. As a result DNA was able to initiate a project specifically designed to introduce communication planning and strategy building into the rural water initiative in the province of Inhambane.

The government hoped that the communication strategy produced for Inhambane could be adapted for use in all the provinces in the country.

It was clear from the start that while government personnel were intrigued by the idea of a communication strategy for the water sector, there was a lot of uncertainty as to what a strategy would actually look like and what it would do. There was also an element of risk associated with the word 'communication'. The word tends to conjure up thoughts of bad public relations and its emphasis on the intangible (process) as opposed to product proved vague and unsettling.

Team building

As part of the team responsible for designing the strategy, we quickly realised that one of our first tasks would be to 'demystify communication' and help sceptical government officials understand that any communication input into rural water initiatives would help rather than threaten their role in implementation. Consequently time was spent explaining communication, its role in development and the various functions that it could fulfil for assisting in the NWP at every level of government – national, provincial and district. This was done through face-to-face meetings with small groups of government officials. In some

cases it was necessary to sit 'one-on-one' to help increase the comfort level for those who felt that they had the most to lose. This need to mitigate government officials' fear of risk was a theme throughout the life of the project.

Localised planning

It was also important to stress to the government that communication works best when it is planned locally and is based on research into the local knowledge, attitudes and habits of the people with whom one wants to communicate (a point which became graphically clear during the field-testing of selected materials). This made the creation of a 'one size fits all' communication strategy for the whole country problematical. Consequently the team put an emphasis and focus on the *process* that would be required to plan any communication initiative rather than the product of a particular strategic approach for Inhambane.

The communication team subsequently divided their work into a series of strategic steps. Each step was documented as it was experienced in Inhambane in an attempt to publish *Communication Planning Guidelines* that could be used by other provinces in preparing similar rural water communication strategies for their particular stakeholders. The steps included:

- assembling the communication team;
 - meeting with the Provincial Director of Public Works to discuss communication planning and setting goals
 - requesting the Director to select focus districts;
 - holding a small workshop to initiate participation and coordination in the first steps of designing a communication plan;
 - assessing the presence of other relevant projects within the province for potential collaboration;
 - assessing the presence and role of media in the province;
 - institutional capacity mapping to identify potential partner institutions;
- Following these logistical steps, the approach then covered similar steps to the Uganda experience:
- identifying the key issues to be communicated;
 - identifying key target audiences;
 - gaining an understanding of audiences' perceptions and constraints;
 - ensuring that services are in synchrony with the strategy (readiness);
 - developing messages and materials, and pretesting;
 - assessing and selecting channels of communication for each target audience.

Audience research

Not surprisingly, it was the actual activities around the audience research that sparked a wave of interest in the communication process. Finally, after weeks of talk, government officials and indeed some members of the communication team got their first real glimpse of the point and power of communication.

The audience research for Inhambane took place over only two weeks. The Communication Team flanked by members of Radio Mozambique and others from the Water Agency initiated a range of participatory

research activities in selected districts of the province. These included focus group discussions with various community groups (men and women), a questionnaire and the use of video to enhance discussion.

The types of information sought from various target groups included:

- role of individual group in rural water supply (perceived and real);
- attitude to issue of community payment (fears and hopes);
- ability and willingness to pay;
- attitude to government services;
- attitude to self-management;
- communication networks;
- trusted method for receiving information;
- knowledge, attitude and practice about sanitation practices;
- knowledge, attitude and practice about clean water practices.

The audience research process is one of the most critical elements in developing a communication strategy. Short though it was in Inhambane, the process helped the Communication Team members and Water Agency personnel understand how important it is to understand the unique response from each stakeholder. Within communities, for instance, there is a wide variety of groups: men, women, old, young, students, poor, poorest, better off, leaders, religious leaders, teachers, literate, illiterate, etc. Each group has its own level of knowledge, attitudes and willingness to change – this may vary even within the same household. As women are the ones responsible for ensuring clean water for the family, they may show a greater willingness to adopt new behaviour than men. The information needs and the communication channels through which that information can be shared differ across audience groups. Women, for example got their information from other women at water points and from the local health care providers. Thus they felt that notices posted at water points or health clinics would be a perfect way to gather information. Men, on the other hand, did not go to the water points and rarely to the health clinic. They relied on politicians, radio or public consultations as sources of information. Politicians themselves were not at all convinced about the ‘community pay’ ethos of the NWP. It was quickly apparent that a great deal of energy would be required to convince them of the value of a demand-based user pay approach.

Inhambane Communication Strategy

The Inhambane Communication Strategy was drawn from an analysis of the findings of the audience research. It was fascinating to see how the short (two-week) research into people’s attitudes and practices unveiled critical findings for the implementation of NWP.

As in Uganda, it became clear that government would need to make much more effort to clarify procedures for the demand-responsive approach. Some of the questions that needed clarification revolved around issues that, indeed, the government itself had still not been able to resolve. These questions included:

- the amount and nature of the commitment required

from communities who want to show interest in project support;

- water supply technology options available to communities;
- number of water points available;
- length of time to receive requests;
- criteria for eligibility;
- timing and format of how government will receive response;
- type, forms and reasons for community contribution.

It became clear that the Communication Strategy was a mirror of the actual government policy. If the government was still finding its way or slightly unclear about certain issues within the NWP, the research leading up to the formulation of a Communication Strategy would expose this lack of clarity. This finding became particularly apparent over the production of communication materials.

Message design and material production

In the Inhambane project, communication materials were prepared to respond to the specific information needs of each audience group, and on the basis of their preferred communication channels. These materials were designed to provide information (on procedures), generate discussion and assist various stakeholders understand the NWP. Mock-ups of the materials were put together for field-testing prior to mass production.

The importance of pre-testing of field material cannot be over-emphasised; it ensures the investment in producing the materials will pay off in terms of people receiving the correct message and interpreting it as expected. When field testing is skipped, the odds of transmitting inaccurate or incomplete information increase.

The field-testing in Inhambane revealed a multitude of ambiguities. For example, there was a lack of clarity around the exact amount that a community would be expected to pay for capital costs. This ambiguity came into focus when community groups were confronted with flash cards generating discussion around the issue of payment. There was also the risk element – that all communities might not be eligible, and/or that the number of available water points might not be sufficient for all eligible communities – which gained prominence as a central issue to address.

After the field-testing, the Communication Team attempted to move forward with full-scale publication. This proved difficult. Clearly the printing of the materials would force the government hand in making those difficult decisions on the issue of community contribution and the loss of political power. This is a very difficult political decision and one that causes most countries to deliberate over the ‘user-pay’ approach to water and sanitation. Clearly it was not possible to fudge the issue in the presence of a Communication Strategy that sought to clarify procedure and promote transparency.

At the end of the day, the experience of formulating the Communication Strategy for Inhambane led to renewed discussion on NWP and the application of its

procedures. The draft strategy was sent around the country (to a wide list of stakeholders involved in the sector) for a peer review which promoted a rich source of comment and insight.

If each province goes through a similar process for formulating individually tailored communication strategies for their drinking water initiatives, feedback from the process will continue to enhance the NWP.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The case studies in Uganda and Mozambique illustrate the role of communication as a strategic tool to put decentralisation policies into practice. While communication strategies are not 'magic bullets', they help articulate the specific organisational and personal roles and capacities that need attention in a new policy environment. The attention to detail emulates a process audit, flagging implementation problems that cannot be ignored. In developing the strategy, the government partners begin to appreciate the basic steps in communication planning and are able to appreciate its rationale.

In both case studies, the authors and their partners in the field focused on developing communication strategies that would allow local organisations to 'learn their way into' the development of these strategies in the hope that they would be able to adjust plans as conditions evolved. This approach contrasts with a more conventional consulting process where a finished product is produced ('turn-key approach') which often leaves the implementing organisation with a limited set of skills to take ownership and adjust plans. This approach emphasised capacity-building in the partner organisations within each country and does depend on the continuity of the staff who are involved in the details of its formulation. The promising achievements demonstrated to date in the case of Uganda certainly point in this direction. The continuation of work in Mozambique is more problematical. While the Department of Rural Water (DAR) was involved in the process, their actual 'buy-in' and willingness to continue will depend on the commitment and understanding of the leadership in the Department.

While the case studies are relevant examples for readers who are implementing similar decentralisation policies, the national contexts remain quite unique. This calls into question how many lessons from the case studies are relevant. Instead of lessons, we prefer to talk about 'principles that travel'. Several principles for communication project design have been proposed by FAO, ODI and DFID (2002) and by IDRC (Gómez and Casadiego, 2002). Some of these principles were relevant as guidelines in both case study experiences.

Offer concrete solutions and use realistic technologies

In Uganda and Mozambique, the audience research phase ensured we utilised communication channels that were already working, or that were promising. This was the case with radio in Uganda in contrast with the proposal for a call centre which, while technically feasible, is likely ahead of its time and hence did not stay on the priority list for implementation.

Move forward at the pace of the community

Moving at the pace of the different communities is a challenge that cannot be underestimated. People cannot shift their roles and behaviours overnight or as a result of a single information input. It is key that the implementing agency adjust the strategy on the basis of the evolution of the stakeholder groups' levels of knowledge and awareness.

Learn from mistakes

Learning from mistakes is the only way to adjust the approach. This is analogous to adjusting the sails on a ship; you cannot predict the wind and will have to adapt your strategy as it changes. In the Uganda case, NAADS is demonstrating this principle is workable in that key pillars of the strategy are being implemented.

Localise globalised communication

With regards to localising communication, this is where stories are so important; they are a most appropriate way to contextualise a message and make it relevant. 'The most important lesson we have learned, and one that we want to share with you, is that ICTs and development projects must be firmly rooted in people's local reality, their organisations, their customs and their culture' (Gómez and Casadiego, 2002).

Work with a gender perspective

The gender perspective was particularly useful in the audience research where it became evident that men and women have different media preferences, which can be as specific as the time of day when they are able to listen to an educational programme on the radio. If these preferences are not acknowledged, the impact of a communication strategy will be limited.

Let people speak with their own voice

Letting people speak with their own voice may sound obvious, but is not often adhered to. Phone-in sessions to local radio programmes can help people hear other voices that they identify with. Hearing others on radio tends to encourage people who would otherwise hesitate to voice their opinions. The active listening pillar in the Uganda strategy centres on this principle.

Generate new knowledge and promote local content; ensure equitable access

Generating new knowledge and promoting local content is central to communication planning. The field testing of materials in Mozambique was an important step in verifying that the content related to local understanding, that the language was appropriate, and that the message was related to a local reality. This also applies to the next principle: ensuring equitable access. In other words, make sure that all stakeholders who must be engaged have access to the media and to affordable means of feedback.

Build capacity

A key lesson from both case studies is the importance of building capacity, and a central lesson is that communication research and planning are steps that

must precede the production of communication materials. Figure 1 provides a six-step cycle for communication planning. In our experience, projects often start at Step 3 and jump directly to Step 5; this most often leads to poor results. Capacity-building efforts that centre on hands-on involvement in the six steps of communication planning can lead to significant improvements in the effectiveness of a project.

Address information costs: who pays?

The communication strategies in both countries are now formally accepted by the implementing organisations. They constitute efforts to help rural stakeholders make the transition towards decentralised, privatised service delivery. However, the issue of cost and who pays merits attention. In the Uganda case, the strategy included a work plan that included cost estimates (see tables 4–6 above). Communication research and materials production cost money, and so does airing radio programmes. Practice has shown, however, that for small projects 8–10% of the overall investment needs to be allocated to communication, whereas with larger projects it can be as low as 3–5% (FAO, 1989). These numbers are approximate as there are various related budget items that also refer to communication, namely capacity-building.

Strengthening existing systems and policies

We emphasise here that communication planning is often not an existing system nor policy. While the strategy should certainly enhance the overall system and policy it is embedded in, the host organisation is often unaware of the importance of having a communication culture within its programming. In our experience this can only be learned by doing it.

While the implementation of the strategies in both countries will require continued commitment and

adjustment, their very existence is already an accomplishment. In the past, rural development projects tended to ignore communication planning, and often relied on improvised public relations efforts that were not based on any local understanding of context nor people's expectations (Ramírez and Quarry, 2004). These strategies show that development planners have begun to appreciate the importance of two-way communication.

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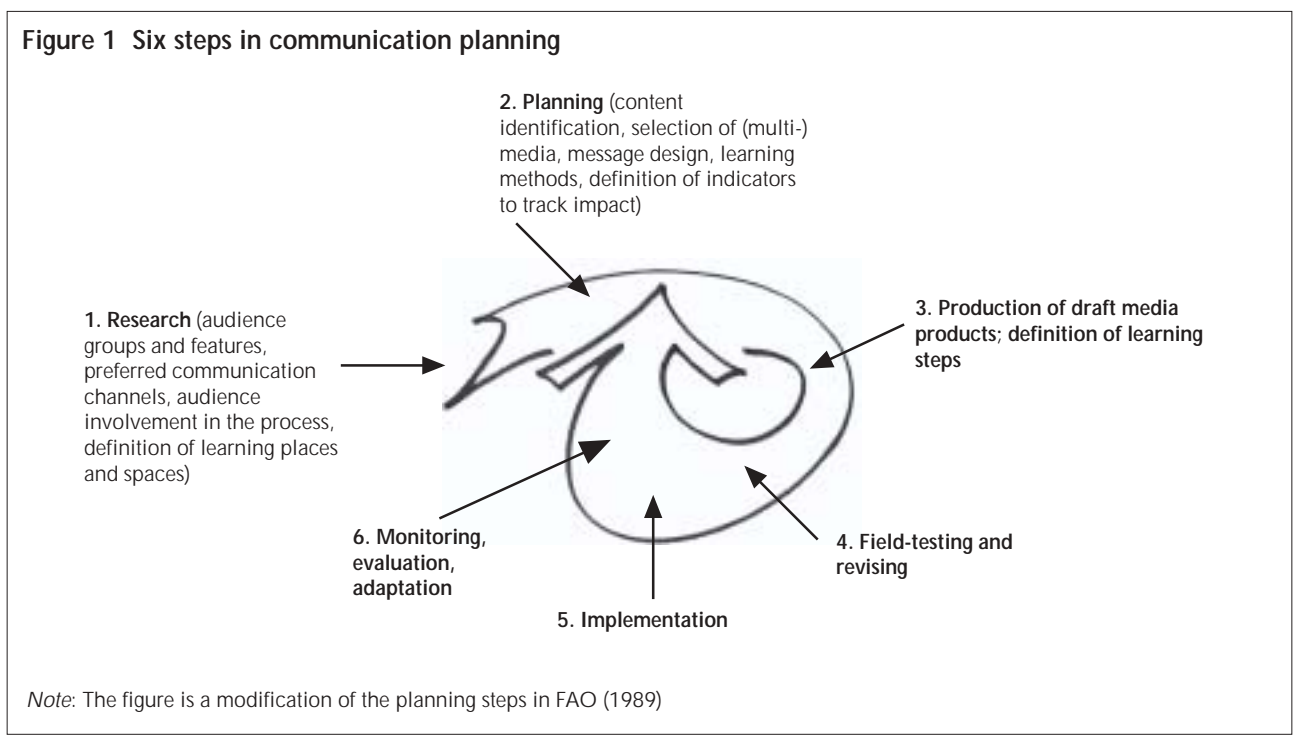
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ENDNOTES

- 1 The International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD) has recognised this; see their story website: www.iicd.org/stories/
- 2 Refer to the NAADS website for copies of these publications: www.naads.or.ug/publications.htm
- 3 Adapted from: Sustém Consultores Ltda./Cowater Intl. (2003).

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