



APAARI Communication Strategy 2010-2015



**Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural
Research Institutions**

APAARI Communication Strategy 2010-2015



Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions
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APAARI Communication Strategy 2010-2015

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Preface

Communication plays an important role in taking the results of an organization to its stakeholders for ensuring intended impact in knowledge, attitude and actions. Realising the need for a communication strategy, the APARIS Steering Committee in its Eighth Meeting in 2009 recommended that APAARI Communication Strategy be developed in order to adopt a strategic and systematic approach to communicate with all the stakeholders and audiences.

A draft APAARI Communication Strategy has been prepared and shared among the experts for comments in the month of June 2010. The comments and suggestions of the experts have been incorporated in the draft and the same has been presented to Information and Communication Managers from the NARS in the Workshop on ICT/ICM for Agricultural Research Information Systems in the Asia-Pacific Region organized jointly by APAARI-FAO-GFAR-AIT at Asian Institute of Technology, Bangkok during 14-16 September, 2010. A Group Discussion has been organized exclusively to discuss on the APAARI Communication Strategy during the workshop. After thorough reviewing, participants provided valuable suggestions and endorsed the APAARI Communication Strategy for its implementation.

Later, the draft APAARI Communication Strategy along with suggestions of the workshop participants was presented to the APARIS Steering Committee in its IX Meeting held on 16 September, 2010 at AIT, Bangkok. The APARIS Steering Committee considered it to be realistic and suggested that the Strategy be implemented during the years 2010-2015 in a step-by-step approach after prioritizing the activities depending on the availability of resources. It was also suggested to categorize stakeholders into primary, secondary and others in order to target the information and communication services and emphasized the need to integrate communication activities with the initiatives like Coherence in Information for Agricultural Research for Development (CIARD) and involvement of national information systems for implementing the Communication Strategy.

The APAARI Communication Strategy has also been presented in the XI Meeting of the APAARI General Assembly held at Suwon, Republic of Korea on 12 October, 2010. Members of the General Assembly appreciated the communication strategy and desired to have it implemented soon for the benefit of all ARD stakeholders in the region.

We thank all the experts, information and communication managers of the NARS and Members of the APARIS Steering Committee who contributed for developing this Communication Strategy. It is our expectation that this APAARI Communication Strategy will serve effectively the research community in the Asia-Pacific region.



(Dr. Raj Paroda)
Executive Secretary
APAARI

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACIAR	Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research
AFMA	Agricultural and Food Marketing Association for Asia and the Pacific
APAARI	Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions
APAFRI	Asia Pacific Association of Forestry Research Institutions
APARIS	Asia-Pacific Agricultural Research Information System
APCoAB	Asia-Pacific Consortium on Agricultural Biotechnology
APSA	Asia-Pacific Seed Association
AR4D	Agricultural Research for Development
ASTI	Agricultural Science and Technology Indicators
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CIARD	Coherence in Information for Agricultural Research for Development
CIARD RING	CIARD Roadmap to Information Nodes and Gateways
CIP	International Potato Center – Centro Internacional de la Papa
Co-op.	Cooperatives
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DFID	Department for International Development
ERA-ARD	European Research Area-Agricultural Research for Development
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FARA	Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa
FOs	Farmers' Organizations
GFAR	Global Forum on Agricultural Research
IARC	International Agricultural Research Centre
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ICT/ICM	Information and Communication Technology/Information and Communication Management
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
ILRI	International Livestock Research Institute
NARS	National Agricultural Research Systems
NGOs	Non-Government Organizations
NINPs	National Information Nodal Points
REI	Research and Extension Institutions
RSS	Really Simple Syndication
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SEARCA	Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture
SWOT	Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat

Executive Summary

1. The APAARI Communication Strategy lays a strategic and systematic approach to communicate with all the stakeholders and audiences with an aim to increase the impact of APAARI's programs through greater involvement of all stakeholders in the whole research process, improved knowledge management, and more effective communication. It presents the situation analysis, communication goals and objectives, principles, stakeholder analysis, information needs and channels, and a communications plan.
2. A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis is carried out to form a basis for the development of strategic plans that capitalize on the opportunities and strengths identified and overcome obstacle of weaknesses and threats. SWOT analysis indicate that there are immense strengths and opportunities and help identify weaknesses and threats that should be overcome.
3. The goal of APAARI Communication Strategy is to raise the profile of APAARI as the lead organization in Agricultural Research for Development (AR4D) in the Asia-Pacific region through communicating results and information in order to influence the stakeholders, partners and ARD community. It aims to provide two-way and well targeted communication to ensure the results of activities by APAARI and its partners achieve impact and contribute to achieving the overarching goal of improving efficiency of ARD in the Asia-Pacific region.
4. The objectives of APAARI Communication Strategy are derived from the Association's vision and objectives. It is assumed to use communications as a means to operationalize the APAARI objectives and strategies by continually communicating the Association's activities and services in ways that enhance its role, strengthen its partnerships, provide access to reliable and cohesive ARD information, increase its resources and enhance its impact on agricultural research for development in the Asia-Pacific region.
5. APAARI Communication Strategy is based on the principles of increasing access to ARD information, APAARI activities; promoting participation, contribution, and collaboration of stakeholders and partners with APAARI programs; harnessing communication channels and new ICT tools/applications; striving for reliable, relevant, timely and useful information in an open, transparent and coherent manner for all the stakeholders; and establishing APAARI as a leading organization to support coherence in information for agricultural research for development and integration of agricultural information systems and services in the Asia-Pacific region.
6. Target audiences include: APAARI Member NARS and other NARS in the region; National Governments and Public Sector Agricultural Research Institutions and Extension Systems; Agricultural Universities and Advanced Research and Educational Institutions; Farmers' Organizations, Cooperatives, Non-Government Organizations and Civil Society Organizations; Regional and Sub-regional Fora; International

Organizations such as GFAR, FAO, ACIAR, CGIAR IARCs, other IARCs; ARD Networks & Information Systems; Other Associations in Agricultural and allied disciplines in the region (e.g.: APSA, AFMA, APAFRI, SEARCA etc.); Private Sector Organizations and Agri-business firms interested in development; Development Banks, Donors; Members of the APAARI Governance and APAARI staff; and General public and Media & Press.

7. Analysis of information needs and information seeking behaviour of audiences play a vital role in the design of communication strategy. Audiences generally seek information that includes: Contact list of ARD stakeholders, database of experts and projects; dialogue/debate on ARD issues through e-discussion forums; Information on country profiles, ARD policy, projects, and research outputs; linkages to regional and global research networks, libraries and institutional knowledge repositories; employment opportunities; information on APAARI activities, publications, success stories etc.
8. Both print and digital communication channels are being used to address the information needs of audiences. These included APAARI Newsletter, Success Stories, Proceedings of Expert Consultations and Workshops, Status Reports on ARD, Declarations, Concept Notes on ARD issues, Posters, Pamphlets, Flyers, Brochures and promotional material (key chains, caps etc.). The digital channels that included APAARI Website, E-mails, digital documents, Powerpoint presentations, Mailing list databases, CD-ROM publications etc. Use of latest information and knowledge management tools and systems such as powerful content management systems, news feeds, discussion forums, list services, web 2.0 and social media are suggested for effective communication.
9. Based on the information needs analysis and use of communication channels, a Communication Plan is proposed along with key issues and timeframe. The activities proposed included development of: Mailing list database; Electronic discussion Forum; Improving APAARI web space; ARD Repository; E-Newsletter; use of RSS newsfeeds and social networking tools for reaching the audiences effectively. Besides, it also proposed to improve quality and brand image of APAARI print publications.
10. It is proposed to follow a rigorous monitoring & evaluation mechanism to measure the impact of communication strategy, if resources permit through external evaluators or else internally.

APAARI Communication Strategy

1. Introduction

The ability to communicate is essential to the success of any organization and an important factor in the achievement of its objectives. Communication plays an important role in taking the results of an organization to its stakeholders for ensuring intended impact in knowledge, attitude and actions. APAARI, as regional forum, is very active in strengthening innovative partnerships for agricultural research for development in the Asia-Pacific region through networking, information dissemination, capacity building, policy support, and partnerships. In fulfilling its mandate, APAARI has been creating useful information and knowledge resources in collaboration with its stakeholders and partners in the field of agricultural development. APAARI should have effective communications with its stakeholders and partners on a continuous basis to implement its activities and disseminate its information services to advocate research results for greater impact.

2. Communication Scenario

In Asia-Pacific region, agricultural research is communicated by different national level research institutions, NGOs, regional organizations, research networks and international organizations via a whole host of academic and professional publishing channels and networks, both formal and informal. A large number of websites and other communication channels maintained by these organizations communicate research results to make information useful, accessible and taken up by intended audiences. There are many institutional actors and individuals involved in all stages of research information, dissemination and consumption at local, national, regional and international levels. Yet communication mechanisms in the region suffer from low participation especially from the developing countries ARD communities and weak coherence in information systems due to lack of proper communication platforms and required skills. The DFID communication strategy (2003) identifies that research communities from developing countries are cut-off from international debates and characterized by gaps like weak communication practices, lack of proper communication systems, weak feedback mechanism, language barriers and lack of government policies etc. APAARI, as a leading regional organization, has been playing a major role in communicating research-based information and knowledge for efficient ARD systems in the Asia-Pacific region through relevant programs and activities since its inception.

3. Role of APAARI

APAARI is committed to promote exchange of agricultural information in the region through establishment of Asia-Pacific Agricultural Research Information System (APARIS). APARIS is mandated to serve as a platform for efficient sharing of information and strengthening of information systems through advocacy and capacity building in ICT/ICM for AR4D in the region.

APAARI has been generating useful information and knowledge products through its activities under three broad functional areas viz., Research Networking, APARIS and Asia-Pacific Consortium on Agri-Biotechnology (APCoAB). The APAARI publications and information services are highly relevant to a variety of organizational stakeholders and audiences that includes individual researchers, extension professionals, development workers, donors, policy makers, administrators, teachers, trainers in agriculture, farmers etc. APAARI disseminate its information products and services through printed publications and web-based systems, CD-ROM publications and other publicity materials. It produced more than 30 success stories in diverse aspects of agricultural innovations which are very popular and well received by audiences. APAARI Newsletter (bi-annual) is a very popular channel for communicating APAARI programs and news about its stakeholders. So far, APAARI published 36 issues of newsletter, more than 50 publications of the proceedings of expert consultations on diverse aspects of ARD and reports on agricultural research priorities in the regions besides publications on APAARI constitution, vision and perspective plan. All these publications are made available on APAARI website and distributed through CD-ROM publications.

To implement its programs, APAARI maintains a strong linkage with its member NARS, support organizations like GFAR, FAO, ACIAR, CGIAR Centres, donors and a variety of stakeholders comprising NGOs, Farmers' Organizations, CSOs, Private sector, other related Associations, National Governments, Agricultural Universities and APAARI governing authorities. APAARI uses different communication channels such as expert consultations, discussion forums, meetings and workshops on topical issues, besides electronic-based communication systems.

4. Need for Communication Strategy

Effective communication can no longer be seen as information dissemination alone. Communication is two-way process rooted in principles of ownership, participation and voice. APAARI should have capabilities to communicate right information to right user at the right time in right format and in turn enable all its audiences and stakeholders to use APAARI communication system to interact among them selves.

Communication does not just happen. It must be organized, developed and built. The first step in the process is to define communication strategy. A good communication strategy gives clarity, emphasizes planning and involves all the stakeholders in raising the visibility of the results of an organization. It is particularly needed to plan how communications can be used to assist an organization in realizing its core objectives and further how to integrate communication with operations, raise impact of communication channels/tools and reorient outreach efforts. The ever changing information and communication technologies and management (ICT/ICM) systems open up new opportunities for APAARI to include all stakeholders in the communication process for greater impact of communications.

The Steering Committee of APARIS in its Eighth Meeting in October, 2009 recommended that a communication strategy be developed for APAARI in order to adopt a strategic and systematic approach to communicate with all the stakeholders and audiences with an aim to increase the impact of APAARI's programs through greater involvement of all stakeholders in

the whole research process, improved knowledge management, and more effective communication. The following sections attempt to outline the APAARI communication strategy.

5. Methodology

The strategy outlines an approach for effective communication arising out of the APAARI core operations – policy advocacy, building research partnerships, regional research networking, transfer of technology, capacity building and information dissemination. It takes note of the experiences of other organizations such as FAO, GFAR, FARA, ILRI, IDRC, CIP and DFID to lay out contours of the draft communication strategy. It followed a desk research and experiences of APAARI that deal with review of the situation, audience and their information needs and communication channels. The draft APAARI Communication Strategy presents the situation analysis, communication goals and objectives, principles, stakeholder analysis, information needs and channels, and a communications plan in the following sections.

6. SWOT Analysis

A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis is carried out to form a basis for the development of strategic plans that capitalize on the opportunities and strengths identified and overcome obstacle of weaknesses and threats.

Strengths:

- APAARI is a well known leading regional organization in AR4D in the Asia-Pacific with majority of ARD stakeholders as its members
- It has been organizing highly relevant and need-based expert consultations, workshops and training programs
- Strong linkage with member National Agricultural Research Systems and other stakeholders in the region
- Good support from organizations like GFAR, FAO, ACIAR and other donors
- Partnership/networking with member NARS and other stakeholders already established
- Linkage with Regional Research Networks established
- Good linkage with NGO Associations and Farmers' Organizations
- APARIS program which is mandated to improve exchange of information and knowledge
- Timely publication of proceedings of meetings, expert consultations and reports
- APAARI success stories on best practices are very popular and used as vehicle for transfer of technology and policy advocacy
- Staff are motivated to communicate

- Popular APAARI Newsletter
- Popular websites of APAARI and APCoAB.

Weaknesses:

- Need for publication and web policies
- Web as a platform for two-way communication is not fully exploited
- No specific communication team
- Dependency on external technical support for IT and web services
- Less participation of stakeholders in information generation
- Communication is mostly one-way, except for general communication
- Difficulty in synthesising and packaging digestible information for users
- Lack of corporate style/branding to communication materials
- Lack of assessment and demonstration of impact of APAARI activities and publications/information services
- Lack of communication objectives
- Ad-hoc communication, not targeted to specific audiences
- Lack for systematic information packaging based on the information needs of users
- Limited coherence in communication and information management with other important partners and networks
- APAARI staff has limited communication skills and technical capacities to operate advanced ICT tools.

Opportunities:

- Role of APAARI as lead organization in AR4D will increase in the regions in the future
- APAARI activities increases collaboration with partners thereby increasing opportunities for effective communications
- Growing importance of information and communication systems by the National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) and the National Information Nodal Points (NINPs) for better exchange of information and knowledge
- Information exchange and capacity building programs of APAARI complement communication opportunities
- Advances in information and knowledge management tools and systems (better content management systems, news feeds, discussion forums, list services, web 2.0 and social media to reach people effectively) provide faster and cheaper two-way communication options to reach more audiences
- Increasing need for disseminating APAARI outcomes in a variety of forms and formats for greater impact

- Growing expectations of individual clients from ARD community comprising scientists, extension functionaries, development workers, farmers and their representatives, government officials, private sector people
- Role of APAARI in promoting CIARD RING and capacity building programs increases opportunities to integrate agricultural information systems and services in the region
- Availability of expertise from GFAR, FAO and experiences from other Regional Fora to improve communications
- APAARI management and staff open to effective communications.

Threats:

- Damage of relationship with partners due to lack of proper communication systems
- Mailing list/contact database is not comprehensive and not accessible freely
- Not being able to move beyond the communication basics (publish, post on website, and e-mail interactions etc.)
- Lack of branding to APAARI communication material
- Information needs of stakeholders and partners are changing fast; they need information in a variety of formats to suite their purpose and prefer free access to information
- Increasing competition from developed national agricultural research systems
- Individual level information preferences are growing; people want direct access to required information in a preferred format.

7. Goals, Objectives and Principles

7.1 Goals

The goal of APAARI Communication Strategy is to raise the profile of APAARI as the lead organization in Agricultural Research for Development (AR4D) in the Asia-Pacific region through communicating results and information in order to influence the stakeholders, partners and ARD community. The strategy will support continuous dialogue with stakeholders and partners to get feedback and inputs into APAARI programs and activities. It aims to provide two-way and well targeted communication to ensure the results of activities by APAARI and its partners achieve impact and contribute to achieving the overarching goal of improving efficiency of ARD in the Asia-Pacific region.

APAARI Vision, Mission, Objectives and Strategies

Vision

Agricultural Research for Development (ARD) in the Asia-Pacific region is effectively promoted and facilitated through novel partnerships among NARS and other related organizations so that it contributes to sustainable improvements in the productivity of agricultural systems and to the quality of the natural resource base that underpins agriculture, thereby enhancing food and nutrition security, economic and social well being of communities and the integrity of the environment and services it provides.

Mission

To promote the development of NARS in the Asia-Pacific region through inter-regional and inter-institutional cooperation.

Objectives

- Promote the exchange of scientific and technical know-how and information in agriculture
- Facilitate the establishment of appropriate research and training programs based on regional, bilateral or national needs and priorities
- Assist in strengthening research organization and management capacity of member institutions
- Strengthen cross-linkage among national, regional and international research centres and organizations including universities through jointly planned research and training programs.

Strategies

In order to harness agricultural science for better future, strengthen the NARS and ensure growth oriented and responsive governance, APAARI follows the following strategies:

- Regional Collaboration and Networking in Priority Programs
- Information Network of Centres of Excellence
- Developing Human Resources
- Policy Advocacy
- Promoting Technology Transfer
- Publication Enhancement
- Resource Generation.

7.2 Objectives

The objectives of APAARI Communication Strategy are derived from the Association's vision and objectives. It is assumed to use communications as a means to operationalise the APAARI objectives and strategies by continually communicating the Association's activities and services in ways that enhance its role, strengthen its partnerships, provide access to reliable and cohesive ARD information, increase its resources and enhance its impact on agricultural research for development in the Asia-Pacific region. APAARI Communication Strategy for 2010-2015 will achieve the following specific objectives in a phased manner:

1. APAARI will be communicating effectively with all its interested audiences through an easily accessible contact list database development that enable cross-linkage among all stakeholders to communicate themselves effectively and continuously
2. APAARI will be strengthening its webspace to be able to conduct its own dialogues, debates and consultations with its stakeholders through e-discussion forums/list services platform facilities to discuss on critical issues related to ARD
3. APAARI will be disseminating effectively its information resources, activities, events, and news updates on its stakeholders to cater information needs of audiences on regular basis through a dynamic webspace development by using suitable content management system, information sharing tools and social networking media
4. APAARI will have a reliable ARD repository to increase access to useful research information at the regional level through relevant content development and establishing linkages to information sources on its webspace that promote greater coherence and integration of agricultural information and services
5. APAARI will have a brand identity to all its communication materials through adopting print & web publishing policies, formats and targeting communications to raise the APAARI profile in order to gain support for its policy advocacy, resource generation and outreach activities.

7.3 Principles

The following principles guide the development and implementations of APAARI Communication Strategy:

- It increases access to knowledge generated by APAARI, its activities and benefits and how APAARI contribute to the goals of stakeholders
- It increases access to useful ARD information in the region
- It includes participation, contribution, and collaboration of stakeholders and partners with APAARI programs and information services
- It uses communication channels and new ICT tools/applications effectively to reach more number of audiences and variety of stakeholders in fastest and cheapest possible ways
- It provides reliable, relevant, timely and useful information in an open, transparent and coherent manner for all the stakeholders

- It encourages and facilitates feedback and response mechanism for APAARI members, partners, and other stakeholders
- It establishes APAARI as a leading organization to support global initiative CIARD RING for greater coherence and integration of agricultural information systems and services in the Asia-Pacific region.

8. Target Audiences

Target Audiences for APAARI communications include the following:

- APAARI Member NARS and other NARS in the region
- National Governments and Public Sector Agricultural Research Institutions and Extension Systems
- Agricultural Universities and Advanced Research and Educational Institutions
- Farmers' Organizations, Cooperatives, Non-Government Organizations and Civil Society Organizations
- Regional and Sub-Regional Fora
- International Organizations such as GFAR, FAO, ACIAR, CGIAR IARCs, other IARCs
- ARD Networks & Information Systems
- Other Associations in Agricultural and allied disciplines in the region (e.g.: SAARC Agriculture Centre, APSA, AFMA, APAFRI, SEARCA etc.)
- Private Sector Organizations and Agri-business firms interested in development
- Development Banks, Donors
- Members of the APAARI Governance and APAARI staff
- General public and Media & Press.

9. Information Needs

Knowledge about the information needs and information seeking behaviour of audiences may play a vital role in meeting their information needs effectively. A systematic study to assess the information needs of ARD organizations and the ICM capacity needs in the region may be necessary to find out the exact subject areas, preferred channels and skills that are required to improve the communications. However, an attempt has been made to list out information needs of audiences based on the review of earlier information need studies and communication strategies of other related organizations. APAARI audiences generally seek the following information:

1. Contact list database of NARS, Partners, NGOs, FOs, CSOs, Donors, Associations, and Private Sector etc.

2. Contact details of APAARI Governing Authorities and Staff
3. Contact list database of experts and consultants
4. Discussions/dialogue/debate on ARD issues through e-discussion forums
5. Information on APAARI current activities, events, news and updates on its stakeholders' activities
6. Information on country profiles, ARD policy, projects, and research outputs
7. Linkages to regional and global research networks, libraries and institutional knowledge repositories
8. Information on NGOs, FOs and CSOs initiatives
9. Information on Agricultural Technologies and Innovations that ARD Institutions provide
10. Success Stories on proven agricultural innovations
11. APAARI Newsletter, proceedings on expert consultations, workshops and symposia
12. Information on innovative partnerships in ARD
13. Information on agricultural commodity profiles in the region
14. Information on Funding and Donor sources
15. Information on educational and employment opportunities in ARD.

APAARI has already been providing some of the above information services to the audiences. A cross tabulation is made to understand how information needs and audiences are inter-related.

10. (continued)

		Audiences											
	Information needs	APAARI Member NARS and other NARS in the region	National Govts. and Public Sector ARI & Extension System	Agricultural University/Advanced REI	FOS, Co-op., NGOs and CSOs	Regional and Sub-Regional Fora	GFAR, FAO, ACIAR, CGIAR-IARCs, other IARCs	ARD Networks & Information Systems	Other Associations in Agriculture	Private Sector Organs and Agri-business firms	Development Banks, Donors	APAARI Governance and APAARI staff	General public and Media & Press
14.	Information on Funding and Donor sources	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
15.	Information on educational and employment opportunities in ARD	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-

11. Communication Channels

An important step in the communication strategy is to determine which communication channel and tools will be used to support the achievement of particular outcomes. APAARI has been utilising informal and formal communication channels to reach its audiences. Informal communications and structured events such as face to face meetings, expert consultations, workshops, symposia, training programs and meeting provide great opportunity to APAARI to communicate with its stakeholders and partners on a regular basis. However, audience of APAARI are diverse and pervasive throughout the ARD community. Both print and digital communication channels are being used to address the information needs of audiences. Following communication channels are identified:

Print-based

1. APAARI Newsletter
2. Success Stories
3. Proceedings of Expert Consultations and Workshops
4. Proceedings of Meetings
5. Status Reports on ARD
6. Declarations
7. Concept Notes on ARD issues
8. Posters
9. Pamphlets, Flyers, Brochures and promotional material (key chains, caps etc.).

Digital/Electronic

1. APAARI Website
2. ARD Repository
3. E-mails
4. Documents in PDF and Word formats
5. Powerpoint presentations
6. Mailing list databases
7. CD-ROM publications
8. E-Newsletter
9. Discussion forum/lists
10. RSS Newsfeeds
11. Videos clips
12. Photographs
13. Audio files
14. Social Networking Media (blog, facebook, twitter, flickr, slideshare, social bookmarking-delicious, vimeo etc.).

Advances in information and knowledge management tools and systems (better content management systems, news feeds, discussion forums, list services, web 2.0 and social media to reach people effectively) provide faster and cheaper two-way communication options to reach more audiences and allowing people to reach out to others around the world.

A cross tabulation is made to find out how information needs and communication channels are inter-related so as to identify activities as per the objectives of communication strategy that are more appropriate to communicate the key messages/information to the audiences.

13. Communication Plan

The following work plan is proposed:

Communication Channel	Key Issues Considered	Actions	Timeframe	Resources Needed	Outcome
Digital/Electronic					
1. Contact database on website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mailing list of APAARI is regularly updated, but it is not available on the website. It is not comprehensive, limited to its member organizations and selected stakeholders. It is necessary to build a comprehensive list of ARD stakeholders through searching/ scouting web sources. 	<p>Develop database of contact list on APAARI website with the existing mailing list for easy access through different search facilities (through country, type of organization, area of research etc.)</p> <p>Build contact details of huge ARD community in Asia-Pacific covering all stakeholders and mount on the website database.</p>	<p>By October 2010</p> <p>By March 2011</p>	<p>-</p> <p>-</p>	<p>A web-based database of contact list of APAARI stakeholders with search and browsing facilities.</p>
2. Electronic discussion Forum/List services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> APAARI website has already Mailman application installed on its website for handling e-mail based discussions. This platform may be used for conducting e-discussions, e-consultations on ARD topics. 	<p>Install Mailiserv facility to handle bulk mail on the existing webserver or depend on discussion platforms like Dgroup.</p> <p>Initiate relevant ARD topics for discussion periodically or coinciding with the APAARI events.</p>	<p>By December 2010</p>	<p>Support from Dgroup, if it is chosen.</p> <p>Tentative topics in ARD and moderators.</p>	<p>An electronic discussion platform for conducting discussions, dialogues and consultations on ARD issues.</p>

13. (continued)

	Communication Channel	Key Issues Considered	Actions	Timeframe	Resources Needed	Outcome
	Digital/Electronic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APAARI recently created APARIS Forum with more than 80 users ICM managers. • An option may be decided to use the existing facility or choose tools like dedicated Mailserv which can handle bulk mailing list activities or platform like Dgroup which is tailor made for development dialogue. 	<p>Identify topical issues on ARD and key questions for facilitating discussions.</p> <p>Identify moderators to facilitate the discussions.</p>			
3.	APAARI Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APAARI needs to strengthen its webspace as major channel of communication by integrating all its services to cater all types of information needs of audiences. • At present WordPress content management system is used for the website that may not support integration of agricultural information systems and services through APAARI website. 	<p>Install suitable content management system AgriDrupal for managing agricultural information effectively.</p> <p>Constitute a team with technical and information management background from the stakeholders to review and guide webspace development and set web policies.</p> <p>Update website on regular basis.</p>	<p>By December 2011</p> <p>By October 2010</p> <p>2010-2011</p>	<p>Support of FAO/GFAR to install AgriDrupal.</p> <p>Technical orientation on AgriDrupal to APAAR staff.</p>	<p>APAARI webspace that integrate information systems and services in the region based on sound web publishing policies.</p>

13. (continued)

	Communication Channel	Key Issues Considered	Actions	Timeframe	Resources Needed	Outcome
	Digital/Electronic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A customised CMS such as AgriDrupal, which comply with agricultural information standards, may be used for APAARI website development for great coherence and integration of agricultural information systems and services. This will also help APAARI to follow information standards so as to fully comply/integrate with world agricultural information systems and to promote Coherence in Information for Agricultural Research for Development (CIARD) movement in the region. 				
4.	ARD Repository	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A repository of information and documents on the following aspects is needed by all the audiences: 	Create webspace for country wise repository and provide linkages to existing resources available NARS related to the topics on APAARI website.	December 2010		A reliable repository source of agricultural information in the region with search and

13. (continued)

	Communication Channel	Key Issues Considered	Actions	Timeframe	Resources Needed	Outcome
	Digital/Electronic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Country profiles ▪ ARD policies of countries ▪ Projects and their outputs ▪ Expertise available ▪ Commodity profiles ▪ Funding sources ▪ Success stories ▪ Technologies from ARD institutions ▪ Donors. • The content of the repository should be systematically organized to provide information on key elements that help decision making and easy access based on suitable formats and content packaging. • Participation and contribution of NARS, NINPs and other stakeholders is essential to build ARD repository. 	<p>Develop suitable formats for information collections to build the repository.</p> <p>Collect information/data/inputs from the NARS, NINPs and also gather information from the webspaces of stakeholders.</p> <p>Package content and analyse data as per the formats.</p> <p>Undertake organization of information (classification, cataloguing, abstracting, summarising, indexing, bibliographies).</p> <p>Create ARD repository on APAARI website.</p>	<p>April 2011</p> <p>July 2011</p> <p>October 2011</p> <p>December 2011</p>	<p>Service of expert to analyse data and provide country profiles, commodity profiles and content packaging.</p> <p>Budget to be finalised.</p>	<p>browsing facilities.</p>

13. (continued)

	Communication Channel	Key Issues Considered	Actions	Timeframe	Resources Needed	Outcome
	Digital/Electronic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experiences of ASTI and ERA-ARD may be utilised to compile analytical information and design of suitable information/data gathering tools. 				
5.	e-Newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> APAARI publishes its Newsletter twice in a year and the same is made available on website. It is felt that events, happenings, updates from NARS and other stakeholders/partners is continuous and needs fast dissemination channel like e-Newsletter to reach more number of audiences. A quarterly e-Newsletter may be started that can provide more information with links to original sources of information and 	<p>Produce and distribute APAARI Electronic Newsletter (quarterly) from March 2011 issue.</p> <p>Create on-line registration on APAARI website for e-Newsletter.</p> <p>Gather and package material in every quarter for e-Newsletter by aggregating news from stakeholder/partners through tools such as RSS, scanning websites and other e-Newsletters.</p>	March 2011	-	A quarterly e-Newsletter

13. (continued)

	Communication Channel	Key Issues Considered	Actions	Timeframe	Resources Needed	Outcome
	Digital/Electronic					
		institutions, and reach through e-mails to audiences in a fast and cheapest manner.				
6.	RSS Newsfeeds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RSS is not fully exploited on APAARI website. Extended use of RSS to harvest and disseminate news from APAARI partners and stakeholders. 	Introduce RSS of APAARI News Introduce RSS aggregator of news from partners and stakeholders.	By December 2010	–	RSS of APAARI news and aggregation of news from partners.
7.	CD-ROM Publications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> APAARI on CD is brought out on regularly that provide access to all APAARI publications and material available on website. CD publications of workshop, meetings, symposia. 	Produce CD publications on regular basis. Regular activity.	2010-2011	–	CD-ROM publications.
8.	Multimedia (video, photographs and audio files)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Video and audio files are not available with APAARI. It is felt necessary to generate information on important meetings, workshops, conferences in these formats (avi, mpeg, wav, jpeg, mp3, ram etc.) 	Produce multimedia material on APAARI events, especially on meetings, consultations and conferences and share on the website and CD-ROM publications Regular activity.	2010-2011	Specific proposals with budget to be finalised.	Video, audio and photographs of APAARI events.

13. (continued)

Communication Channel	Key Issues Considered	Actions	Timeframe	Resources Needed	Outcome
Digital/Electronic					
9. Digital Documents (E-mails, PDF, Word, Excel etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APAARI provides all its publications in different formats accessible on its website. 	Regular activity.	2010-2011	-	Digital documents in different formats.
10. Social Networking Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web 2.0 technologies are changing the way messages spread across the Web. • Social media tools are effective to reach people to provide faster and cheaper two-way communication options and allowing people to reach out to others around the world – letting them connect, engage and share among themselves. • APAARI on Twitter is available. 	<p>Start services such as APAARI Blog, APAARI BookMarks, APAARI Flickr, APAARI Presentations, APAARI on Facebook, and APAARI videos on vimeo.</p> <p>Current and latest Web-based collaboration tools will be used irrespective of the names that might become obsolete soon.</p>	January 2011	Familiarization of social media to at least two staff members in APAARI to maintain information on these platforms.	Presence of APAARI on social media platforms to reach many audiences.
Print -based					
11. APAARI Newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular bi-annual popular publication • It is suggested bring out in new style and design. 	Produce as per the periodicity with new layout and design from December 2010 issue.	December 2010, June 2011, December 2011 issues.	Professional designers help and budget to be finalised	A new improved APAARI Newsletter.

13. (continued)

	Communication Channel	Key Issues Considered	Actions	Timeframe	Resources Needed	Outcome
Print-based						
12.	Proceedings of Expert Consultations, Workshops, Conferences etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular publications Needs to publish in consistent design and layouts to ensure brand image 	Produce as per the requirement with consistent design and content organization.	2010-2011	Professional designers help and technical editorial assistance/language editors. Budget to be finalised.	Quality reports from APAARI.
13.	Posters, Pamphlets, Flyers and other promotional material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular activities Needs good design and layout 	Print posters, pamphlets, brochures, flyers etc., in good designs highlighting the achievements and display/distribute at important meetings.	2010-2011	Professional designers help and budget to be finalised.	Quality promotional materials.

14. Evaluation Plan

It is important that a systematic evaluation plan is developed to conduct outcome and impact assessment of communication products and services to know which products and tools are hitting their targets, how audiences receives them and how their perception of APAARI might be changing etc. This would help to change both strategy and information products to reflect audiences views and experiences with communications. It is suggested to follow a rigorous monitoring & evaluation process to communication strategy, if resources permit through external evaluators or else internally. However, the following methods are suggested to monitor and evaluate communications:

- Creating an Impact Log comprising stakeholders feedback.
- A regular monitoring mechanism to review and report outcomes of communication activities.
- Conducting formal survey of audiences through structured on-line questionnaire.

15. Steps in the Process of APAARI Communication Strategy

The APAARI Communication Strategy has been developed through a consultative process involving the experts from the field of Information and Communication for Agricultural Development and senior Information and Communication Managers of the National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) in the Asia-Pacific region. The steps in the development process of APAARI Communication Strategy are given below:

1. A zero draft has been prepared based on the methodologies of communication strategies of different agricultural organizations and guidance from the experts in the fields of communication for development.
2. The zero draft has been shared with experts in the field of Information and Communication Management for AR4D and the members of the APARIS Steering Committee for suggestions and comments. The suggestions have been incorporated in the draft APAARI Communication Strategy.
3. The same draft has been presented in the workshop on ICT/ICM for Agricultural Research Information Systems in the Asia-Pacific region held during 14-16 September, 2010 at AIT, Bangkok wherein more than 21 senior Information and Communication Managers of the NARS and 15 expert resource persons in the field of ICT/ICM for AR4D participated. After thorough discussion, participants of the workshop provided valuable suggestions, agreed to collaborate and contribute and finally endorsed the APAARI Communication Strategy for its implementation.
4. The APAARI Communication Strategy thus endorsed has been presented, along with the suggestions of workshop participants, in the IX Meeting of the APARIS Steering Committee held on 16 September, 2010 at AIT, Bangkok. While appreciating the draft of the Communication Strategy, the APARIS Steering

Committee members considered it to be realistic and made the following suggestions:

- It was suggested to implement the APAARI Communication Strategy during the years 2010-2015
 - A phased approach may be followed to implement it, and activities be prioritized and taken up step by step depending on the availability of resources.
 - Categorization of stakeholders into primary, secondary and others will be useful to target the information and communication services.
 - Integration of communication activities with the initiatives like CIARD was felt desirable.
 - Involvement of national information systems will be essential for implementing the Communication Strategy.
5. The Committee discussed each activity proposed under the work plan of the Communication Strategy for feasibility and suggested the following recommendations for implementation:

S. No.	Activity	Recommendation
Digital/Electronic		
1.	Contact database	After reviewing the web-based APAARI Contacts Database, it was recommended to allow downloading of addresses by the registered users only to maintain security of information. It was suggested NARS and other ARD stakeholders be involved in developing the contacts database.
2.	Electronic discussion forum/list services	It was observed that APAARI created a facility to organize electronic discussions on ARD topics as per the needs. However, it was recommended that this facility may be used after identification of suitable themes by APAARI depending on the needs of ARD community.
3.	APAARI Website	It was felt that website development is a continuous activity and updating of information is very important. The present content management system (Wordpress) was found serving the website management activities of APAARI. The application and use of AgriDrupal and other tools for content management system promoted by FAO/GFAR was suggested.

4.	ARD Repositories	It was opined that ARD Policy and ARD project information is very important. It was suggested to create a platform to develop information repository of ARD related aspects with the collaboration and contribution by the NARS/NINPs.
5.	e-Newsletter	It was felt that maintenance of e-Newsletter requires considerable time and effort and hence may be difficult to maintain; it is suggested to continue the APAARI Newsletter which is an important channel for communication and make it available on website regularly.
6.	RSS Newsfeeds	It was felt that use of RSS application may be used on APAARI website for dissemination of information.
7.	CD-ROM Publications	As proposed, it was recommended to continue CD-ROM publications by APAARI.
8.	Multimedia	As proposed, it was suggested to undertake this activity based on the needs and resources.
9.	Digital Documents	As proposed, it was recommended to continue this regular activity.
10.	Social Networking Media	While noticing the use of social networking media in fast communication is significant, it was suggested to plan for such media tools on need-based approach.
Print-based		
11-13.	APAARI Newsletter, Proceedings Posters. Pamphlets, Flyers and other promotional material	It was suggested to continue all the print publications that include APAARI newsletter, reports, success stories, proceedings of the meetings, flyers, posters and other promotional materials on regular basis.

6. A presentation on APAARI Communication Strategy was made in the XI General Assembly Meeting (GAM) of APAARI held on 12 October, 2010 at Suwan, Republic of Korea. Need to empower National Information Nodal Points (NINPs) for exchanging freely the information of general nature concerning AR4D was also highlighted. Members appreciated the APAARI Communication Strategy and desired to have it implemented soon for the benefit of all concerned in the region.

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