

Sample Strategic Communications Plan

Below is a sample plan developed by Family Health International to guide trial communications in one country. It has been left partially filled out to show what a written plan contains.

Strategic Communications Plan for X Trial

Below we describe the study's major vulnerabilities (issues, groups, individuals, or community concerns that could limit the success of the study) and our plans to address these issues before they become problems (what we will do, why, with whom, and how). The key elements in the plan include:

- Environmental scans
- Partnering and networking
- Ongoing communication with stakeholders
- Engagement with activists
- Public information and research dissemination
- Selective outreach to news media
- Good internal communications
- Research dissemination

Introduction/background

[Fill in here]

Team/roles

[Fill in here]

Environmental scan and analysis of vulnerabilities

[Fill in here]

Objectives (internal/external)

[Specify objectives clearly, as shown in examples below.]

1. *Improve how scientific information is disseminated within the network.*
2. *Improve dissemination of scientific information to the community where trials are conducted.*
3. *Improve the utility, accessibility, functionality of the Web site.*
4. *Increase visibility of the network among interested stakeholders internationally and locally to facilitate community and stakeholder engagement.*

Existing relations and outreach to key research partners and stakeholders

The study team will continue making contact with researchers and community members at various levels. The two PIs are well recognized in their areas and will be quite useful in keeping contact with the network of researchers in their site. Existing communication with partners and stakeholders includes the following: [List as appropriate for your trial.]

1. *Relations with government officials and other decision makers*
2. *Relations with the local study communities*
3. *Relations with local, national, or regional advocacy groups*
4. *Donors active in supporting HIV programs: USAID, DFID, WHO, Gates Foundation, Clinton Foundation, EG-PAF, UNAIDS*
5. *Health professionals*

Strategy for rapid response to controversy

As a controversy emerges, the communications team will work with appropriate individuals from the groups listed above to identify: [Write down what is relevant for your trial.]

1. *Possible steps to change the course of the issue's progression: This may include communication intended to inform, advise, demonstrate due diligence, demonstrate caring, etc.*
2. *Other communications activities will be implemented to build consensus or support among opinion leaders and key stakeholders, such as meetings, press briefings, and the placement of op-ed pieces by prominent colleagues with credibility in health and human rights.*
3. *Site-specific communications: In all network sites, we will depend very heavily on local CABs to acquire information and to respond to community concerns, rumors, and other misinformation within the sites. CAB members will be trained on the importance of their role. The PIs will be the project's spokespeople at the sites, and the network can assist them to prepare responses to issues as they emerge.*

Ongoing communications that target specific audiences

[Write down key groups you will need to inform on an ongoing basis, and how you will do that.]

1. *News media: The network can stay in touch with a small group of journalists through whom communications about the network will be made. These journalists will be identified through their previous work on covering research and HIV/AIDS and through their media affiliation.*
2. *Local community: Community education forums will be conducted by site teams.*
3. *Government or ministry officials: Quarterly briefing sessions will be organized for Ministry of Health officials to keep them up to date with the site-level activities. They will also receive regular information through the newsletter.*
4. *Public health professionals will receive updates through the newsletter.*
5. *Study staff/research teams: Staff members will be trained in the area of research literacy and will learn how to answer tough questions that may be asked by community members during community education forums.*
6. *Activists or other civil society groups.*

Materials needed to support communication and dissemination plans

We will identify the communications materials that will need to be written and distributed (including language and target audience) and determine who is responsible for each of these materials. These will include: [List materials you need to support your plan.]

1. *A statement about the network*
2. *A list describing other HIV prevention studies being conducted in each country and key events for these*
3. *Annotated lists of activists in each country*
4. *Calendar of relevant meetings and conferences, nationally and globally*
5. *Q&A*
6. *Contact list of site staff*
7. *Media guidelines governing coordination and procedures for media inquiries*
8. *Materials to include in training of study team: presentation on communications, research literacy issues (including research concepts and study procedures as well as issues pertaining to prevention trials) and how to answer difficult questions*
9. *Rapid response plan*
10. *List of key resources*
11. *Internal Web portal/Basecamp site with network materials*
 - *Protocol*
 - *Community assessments*
 - *News clips*
 - *Photographs*
 - *Backgrounders and Q&As*
 - *Contact lists*