



# INFORMATION DISSEMINATION GUIDELINES

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## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this booklet is to help Researchers at the Department of Agricultural Research (DAR) to develop a plan for disseminating their research findings and products to potential users in the Agricultural Sector. This booklet is designed to prompt researchers' thinking about the processes they would use to disseminate their findings or products, that is encourage them to consider various ways to reach these users.

### **1. DEFINING DISSEMINATION**

Dissemination is defined as a process that involves a share of results and experiences with the aim of influencing the way other people think and act, or of making them aware of a new idea, product or service (Harmsworth & Turpin, 2000).

### **2. HOW TO DISSEMINATE YOUR INFORMATION**

The means of delivery is a key part of the strategy for better information dissemination. The key to effective dissemination is to match the means to the message and needs of the audience. There are lots of ways to deliver information, from a slogan on a t-shirt to a video on YouTube. The key is to adopt a method that will work for the target audience and for the type of content you have to deliver as there are challenges of how to disseminate to maximum effect within the constraints of the resources the department has.

Information is a tool to be used: it works best as a part of broader human interaction. Some people will access information directly from a leaflet or a website, but others will gain knowledge through word of mouth or through interaction with a variety of intermediaries.

### **3. REASONS FOR DISSEMINATION**

The reasons for undertaking the process of dissemination are many such as to motivate, inspire, suggest, call attention to something, arouse curiosity, enlighten, encourage, make visible, channel, sum up, concentrate, caution, prevent and introduce. The three broad reasons are listed below.

### **3.1 Dissemination for Awareness**

The point here is to make people aware of the technology or new product that has just been released. Creating such awareness will help the target audience to gain interest of the work done and hopefully begin to inquire more about it.

### **3.2 Dissemination for Understanding**

Creating awareness about a new technology is not enough. What is needed is to also to make sure that the intended audience understands what the technology is, how to use it so that it can be of benefit to them.

### **3.3 Dissemination for Action**

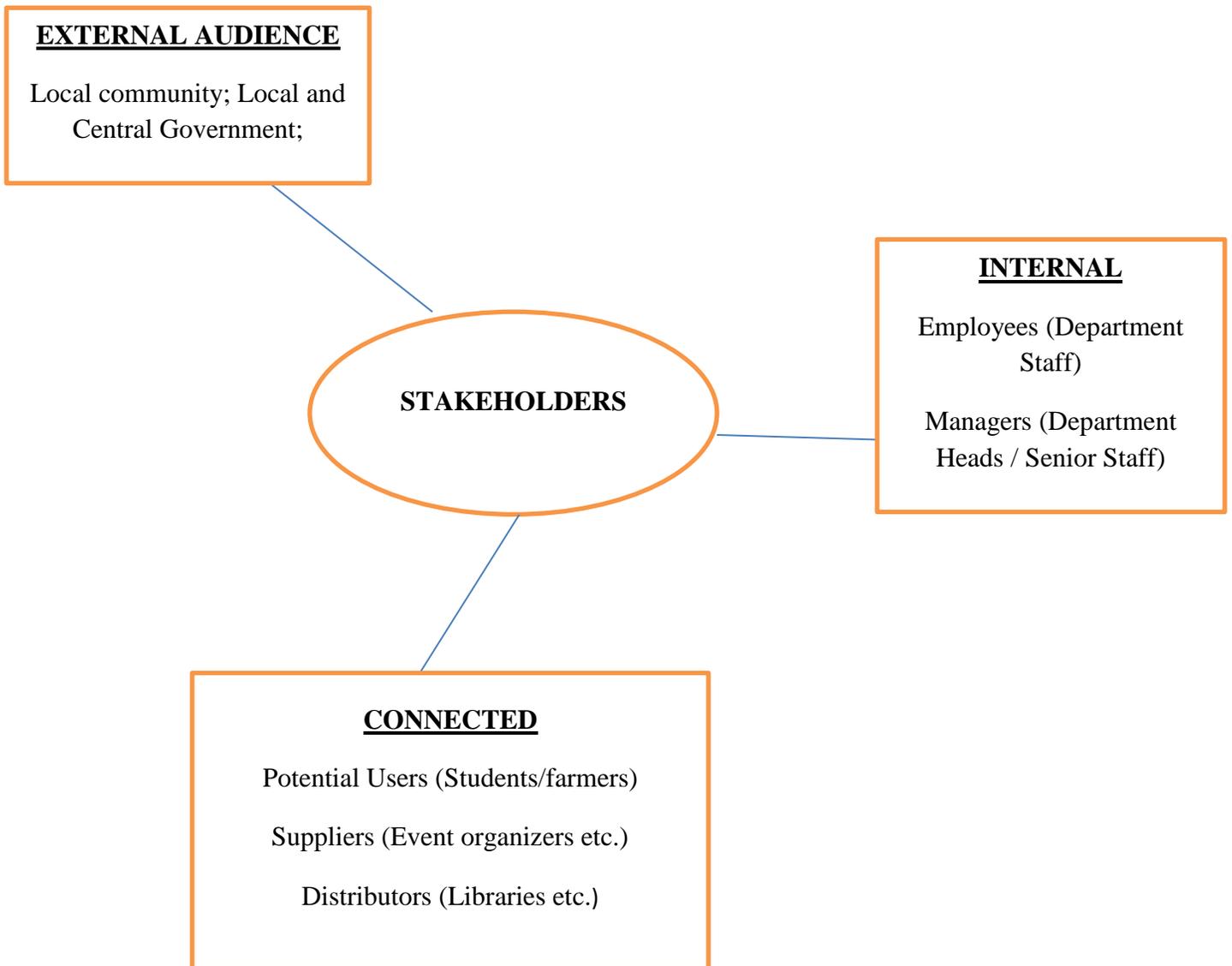
“Action” refers to a change of practice resulting from the adoption of products, materials or approaches offered by the new product. Action can be taken by groups/audiences who are people that are in a position to “influence” and “bring about change” within their work-place. They will need to be equipped with the right skills, knowledge and understanding of the new product in order to achieve real change.

## **4. WHAT DO WE WANT TO DISSEMINATE**

For each and every technology, product or change in practice, the disseminating person needs to know what it is exactly that he/she needs the target audience to know. For example, in releasing a new maize variety, the researcher may be interested in letting maize farmers know how resistant the variety is to diseases, that it can withstand harsh weather conditions and about its yielding capacity. The importance of knowing what to disseminate lies in the fact that it helps researchers to plan their dissemination strategy in an informed manner.

## **5. WHO ARE THE STAKEHOLDERS TO DISSEMINATE TO**

Once the researchers have clearly identified what it is they want to disseminate, they now need to think about to whom they want to disseminate. This is because there are many groups of people or individuals who would be interested in different ways to the released product/technology. For example, the interest of a maize farmer may not be the same as that of an academia or a milling company. This then requires analysis of the various stakeholders. The following is an example of stakeholder analysis.



**Figure 1:** Stakeholder Analysis Model

## **6. WHEN TO DISSEMINATE?**

In the course of preparing for the start of a research work/trial, the researcher will have drawn up a plan that identifies his/her objectives and outcomes. One of these outcomes needs to be the completion of a particular dissemination activity. This means that the researcher's dissemination activities should be an integral part of the trial's work-plan from the on-set. The planning and development of the dissemination strategy must have equal importance placed on it as the other preparatory work that will be done, or have already been done.

## **7. THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAYS OF DISSEMINATING**

Effective dissemination can be defined as a process which engages recipients in a process; whether it is one of increased awareness, understanding or commitment and action. Effective dissemination also depends on the audience the researcher is trying to reach. To ensure that intended messages reach the right audiences, the researcher needs to place more emphasis on the quality as opposed to quantity dissemination. Moreover, the researcher needs to decide on the appropriate method of dissemination that will meet the needs of his/her stakeholders.

There are cases where a similar project or work is done by a different organisation; it is then advisable to contact such an organisation to plan together on how to maximize resources when undertaking the dissemination process. For example, Conservation Agriculture (CA) can be done by many organisations in one area and to disseminate this concept, these organisations need to work together to come up with the best strategy/s to use for dissemination that will not confuse their intended end users.

The following is a list of the different types of dissemination media that researchers can use.

### ***7.1 Newsletters***

Short newsletters every quarter or phase of the research project can keep the audience informed of progress and continue to stimulate interest. The researcher should think about the important issues for his/her audiences and focus the newsletters around these to be sure to disseminate the required information.

### ***7.2 Brochures***

They are informative papers or promotional documents that are primarily used to introduce organisations, products or services and also to inform different stakeholders of the benefits of what the brochure is presenting.

### ***7.3 Conferences***

Conferences can be a very useful forum where researchers can consult with their target audiences in a face-to-face capacity and to address issues relevant to the work of their project.

### ***7.4 Reports***

Reports can be a useful way to publicize and disseminate findings from the researchers work/projects and can form part of his/her project's deliverables. These can be produced either in hard copy or made available on the website.

### ***7.5 Workshops***

Workshops differ from conferences in that they are targeted at smaller groups of participants and involve a much higher and more active level of engagement. For example, a workshop might be organised as a "hands-on" session allowing participants to try out particular materials and approaches.

### ***7.6 Media***

Obtaining news coverage, whether at a national or local level, can reach a very wide body of stakeholders who have an interest in the type of project the researcher is undertaking. Targeting media channels that are relevant to the agricultural related issues can be very effective.

### ***7.7 Websites***

The Internet can serve as an invaluable tool in an effort to disseminate research information across a wide audience. Research reports can be disseminated on various websites which are related to the subject matter being disseminated.

### **7.8 *Field days***

This is another way of disseminating research results where the stakeholders get to see and ask questions based on what they are seeing on the ground. It is usually used for sharing information from on-farm and on-station research and demonstrations. During field days, brochures can be distributed that have information on the activities of the day.

## **8. WHO MIGHT HELP US DISSEMINATE?**

Identifying existing channels through which to work can be one of the most effective methods of dissemination. It may happen that in most cases, your target audiences will already have events, journals, professional bodies and subject associations that they engage with, hence your project will stand a greater chance of success if you can work through these existing channels. It is also worth finding out what other projects working in the same subject area or around the same topics you are doing and then approaching them with a view to collaborating - this will probably improve the impact of your dissemination as well as reduce overall costs. Issues to take into consideration when thinking about collaborating with other organisations include:

- Identify what journals your target audiences are most likely to read.
- Identify what websites your target audiences are most likely to use and see if links to your site can be made.
- Identify other projects working in the same or similar area to you and think about how you might collaborate.
- Avoid duplication of effort – if someone else has already done it then think about another way of using your resources.

## **9. HOW TO PREPARE A DISSEMINATION STRATEGY**

A dissemination strategy is a structured plan for spreading information to as wide an external audience as possible. For any dissemination strategy to be effective each member of the team needs to feel a sense of ownership; they need to be involved at all stages of the strategy's development and ensure that each member has a responsibility for a particular aspect of the strategy's

implementation. In order to come up with a coherent document that sets out the project's dissemination strategy, the following headings are suggested:

- Aims and objectives of the research project
- What the project proposes to disseminate?
- Target audiences/groups
- Benefits to end users
- Dissemination methods/activities
- Timescales and responsibilities
- Costs
- Evaluation and criteria for success

## 10. HOW TO TURN THE STRATEGY INTO AN ACTION PLAN

Experts have shown that producing a coherent strategy does not necessarily result in effective implementation unless the strategy is articulated as a clear set of actions.

Table 1: The following table is an example of a strategy for the TCP/LES/3503 Project turned into an action plan

<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>TARGET GROUPS</b>	<b>METHOD</b>	<b>RESOURCES</b>	<b>TIMING</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY OF</b>
Introduce the project to different stakeholders	MAFS Departments, Line Ministries, NGO's, Academia, farmers	Power point presentation, brochures	Boardroom, laptop, projector	Oct-2015	Project Coordinator, National Project Team
Familiarise the department staff about the project	CRO's, SRO's, and RO's	Power point presentation	Boardroom, laptop, projector	Dec, 2015	Project Coordinator
Raise awareness of the work of the project	MAFS Departments, Line Ministries, NGO's, Academia, farmers	Formal meetings, tours, presentations	Transport, Boardroom, laptop, projector	On Going	IP Members, steering committee members

Promote the project through the media	Farmers and other stakeholders	TV, radio, articles, Stories, Personal contact with journalists	Transport, communication tools(internet, telephones) and power	On-Going	IP Members, steering committee members
Share and promote findings of Project	All stakeholders	Papers, Publications, Media, internet, presentations	Transport, communication tools(internet, telephones) and power	End of the project workshop	National Project Team

## 11. HOW TO COST DISSEMINATION ACTIVITIES

After developing the strategy and the work-plan, the next step is to ensure that each dissemination activity has been carefully costed. Once the process of breaking down the dissemination activities is over, for example, workshops, a conference, a newsletter, a website; one can then begin to obtain estimates of the costs involved. Table 2 below gives an example of activities that can be costed.

Table 2: Activity Costing

<b>Different Aspects for Consideration when running a Workshop</b>	<b>Estimated Costs (M-Maluti)</b>
Venue/Room Hire	M1000.00
Equipment e.g. projector, PCs	M 3000.00
Refreshments e.g. Coffees, water, lunch	M5000.00
Publicity materials, e.g. brochures	M1000.00
<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>M10, 000. 00</b>

## 12. HOW TO KNOW IF THE DISSEMINATION STRATEGY HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL

An effective dissemination strategy is and will be considered effective if it is viewed as an evolving and constantly developing process. This is because the environment during the life cycle of the project will change; hence the need to continually examine the extent to which the dissemination strategy is meeting the project's objectives. The success of the dissemination strategy can only be reviewed and measured if clear targets have been established from the on-set. The most effective way of establishing targets is to link them with the five purposes of dissemination which will help to focus and drive the dissemination.

*The five purposes are:*

- Awareness
- Support and favourability
- Understanding
- Involvement
- Commitment

**THE ABOVE MATERIAL WAS ADOPTED FROM:**

1. Harmsworth, S & Turpin S (2000). Creating an Effective Dissemination Strategy: An Expanded Interactive Workbook for Educational Development Projects  
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3. Martiat, A (2010). Dissemination Strategy Training workshop  
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