

Document: EB 2021/133/R.4  
Agenda: 4(b)  
Date: 12 August 2021  
Distribution: Public  
Original: English

**E**



## **Global Communications and External Advocacy – The way forward to IFAD12 and beyond**

### **Note to Executive Board representatives**

#### Focal points:

#### Technical questions:

**Hélène Papper**  
Director  
Communications Division  
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2221  
e-mail: h.papper@ifad.org

#### Dispatch of documentation:

**Deirdre Mc Grenra**  
Chief  
Institutional Governance and  
Member Relations  
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2374  
e-mail: gb@ifad.org

Executive Board — 133<sup>rd</sup> Session  
Rome, 13-16 September 2021

---

**For: Review**

## Contents

<b>Global Communications and External Advocacy – The way forward to IFAD12 and beyond</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>I. Building the Foundation</b>	<b>3</b>
A. Building familiarity, trust and credibility	3
B. “Street recognition”	6
C. Inspiring our workforce	6
<b>II. Moving forwards strategically with urgency</b>	<b>6</b>
A. Advancing IFAD’s positioning and brand	6
<b>III. Going forward – communications in action</b>	<b>8</b>
A. Decentralization	8
<b>IV. Priority themes</b>	<b>10</b>
A. Turning themes into messages	11
<b>V. Conclusion</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>VI. Acknowledgements</b>	<b>13</b>

### Annexes

- I. Key action areas
- II. Implementing the strategic approach

### Attachment

Global Communications and External Advocacy – The way forward to IFAD12 and beyond

## **Recommendation**

The Executive Board is invited to review this document and its attachment, which contains this Strategic Communications Approach in a visually compelling format.

## **Global Communications and External Advocacy – The way forward to IFAD12 and beyond**

### **Communication: Visibility with a purpose**

#### **Putting rural lives at the heart of the global narrative**

1. IFAD is unique. It is the only specialized global development organization – a UN-IFI hybrid – exclusively dedicated to transforming agriculture, rural economies and food systems through a variety of funding mechanisms that ensure its investments reach millions of rural people at greatest risk of being left behind.
2. What we know is that IFAD goes the extra mile. It has a proven comparative advantage in terms of targeting the most vulnerable, as well as its long-term efficiency and effectiveness. IFAD also plays an essential role in advancing the 2030 Agenda, particularly SDGs 1 and 2.
3. Today, more than ever before, IFAD’s unique mandate and the development issues it addresses have become an important part of a growing global narrative. While rural development and the challenges faced by small-scale producers were once issues only touched upon by a select group of development organizations and media outlets, in recent years there has been a major shift.
4. IFAD’s focus on rural development as a prerequisite to global resilience increasingly resonates around the world. In 2020 IFAD was featured in the world’s most prominent media, from The Guardian to Newsweek, from Les Echos and Le Monde to the BBC, Deutsche Welle and the China Daily. Forbes magazine specifically called on the world’s billionaires to invest in IFAD as one of the top three organizations that really do impact the future of our planet.

#### **The time is now**

5. The opportunity has never been better, but seizing the moment to increase IFAD’s visibility and profile is a collective commitment and definite choice. If we choose visibility, then we need to focus on its purpose and expected outcomes. Today, the immediacy of digital technology allows everyone and anyone to chime in and be heard. Our challenge is to rise above the noise by presenting a strong, clear and resoundingly unified voice.
6. It does not matter how big or small you are – visibility is a necessity. What matters is how you stand out in a crowded field, how you get people to pay attention and to understand why you matter, to drive the narrative in your favour and, more importantly, to make your audiences feel they matter, and that what you say matters to them. And that they take actions in support of your cause.
7. Before we get started, let’s go back to the basics. Communications is all about connecting the dots. We analyse what’s happening in the world around us. We think about the bigger picture and then we relate it back to our purpose, our mandate, our needs, while taking into consideration the needs and ambitions of others.

8. Within the context of IFAD, that means that we connect global realities and concerns to those of rural people and reflect that narrative back to influencers, leaders and the population at large.
9. To do this, we define the messages, develop campaigns and customize our approach to our various audiences and through our diverse channels to position IFAD in the best possible way for the best possible outcome. We leverage our partnerships to maximize our reach and echo our calls for action.
10. To be successful, we need to have a multi-faceted approach, addressing the political, socio-economic, cultural and geographical variables while continuing to develop our multilingual approach, in order to ensure our messages and calls for action resonate where we need them to. And today we have a unique opportunity because our work, our expertise and our ambitions have made it to the top of global agendas. Our voice can and should resonate loud and clear, giving us the opportunity to establish IFAD as a thought leader.
11. Stateless, transnational challenges, like climate change, the global migration crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, are currently what occupies the attention of national governments, their citizens and the media – all of which can be linked back to IFAD. With our particular expertise, our focus on scaling up rural development, and making sure no one is left behind, this is our opportunity to weigh in, make our voices heard and be part of the global dialogue to showcase our comparative advantage. Finally, we need to ensure that we aren't just pushing out but also pulling in by listening, facilitating dialogue and monitoring and evaluating our work on a constant basis so that our stories from the field showcase IFAD's purpose, expertise and results. We need to show and not tell why IFAD is the "right choice". Because investing in IFAD is, after all, a choice, and communication is there to make it an obvious one.
12. Choosing the right partners to echo our calls to action, support innovation and maximize the number of people we reach are equally fundamental.
13. Decentralizing our efforts and making sure that we use our global footprint to make a difference also needs to be at the heart of our strategic approach going forward – it enhances IFAD's ability to be as the voice for the rural poor around the world.
14. Leveraging the data and evidence of IFAD's results generated through project teams, operational divisions and knowledge management ensures we have credible messages backed by solid evidence. This, in turn, will enable us to strengthen our case that IFAD is key to global resilience and vital to sustainable development and achieving the 2030 Agenda. The very same principles apply to a strategic approach to internal communications. Here too, communications need to connect people in a more visible and productive way, opening new spaces for dialogue, engagement and commitment to the future of our organization. In doing so we will be stronger together.

## I. Building the foundation

1. This Global Communications and Public Advocacy approach aligns with IFAD's agenda for growth and describes how purposeful strategic communication will lead the way forward, ensuring IFAD's success during the IFAD12 years and beyond. It is an outcome of the IFAD11 commitment 3.5 (33) which calls for an update of IFAD's Communications Strategy and Action Plan. Based on the vision presented here, the Communications Division (COM) proposes steps to ensure the institution is well known, endorsed and strongly supported by Member States, kindred NGOs, and the private and philanthropic sectors. Furthermore, it aims to position IFAD as a thought leader and a driver of change by engaging audiences (particularly youth) in why rural development matters for our global future. A critical point raised in this strategic approach is that visibility with a purpose begins with a conscious shift from thinking about communications as an on-demand service to a strategic partner that is essential to reaching the institution's highest goals. This choice, aligning with COM's organization and function, will positively impact IFAD's ability to be a leader in the development and financial sectors. This in turn will determine whether IFAD will be the first choice for engagement and investment by Member States, individuals, NGOs, foundations and the private sector.

### A. Building familiarity, trust and credibility

2. Close your eyes for a second and think of UNICEF; what is the first image that comes to mind? Now do the same with UNHCR, with WFP, with UNESCO even ... if you are like most people, an image immediately comes up. A single defining picture that tells you more about their work than any words could. Those images combined with the fact that their names are so familiar generate a sense of belonging, importance, respect.
3. These institutions work hard every day to project their identity, value and appeal through strategic communications. They know that donors, lenders, governments and programme partners choose the multilaterals and financial institutions they know and trust to use their funds and other assets efficiently and effectively, during crises as well as in so-called normal times. Strategic communication builds trust and familiarity for an organization, enhancing its credibility. This, of course, requires a critical mass of sustained effort and support to communicate effectively and to be seen.

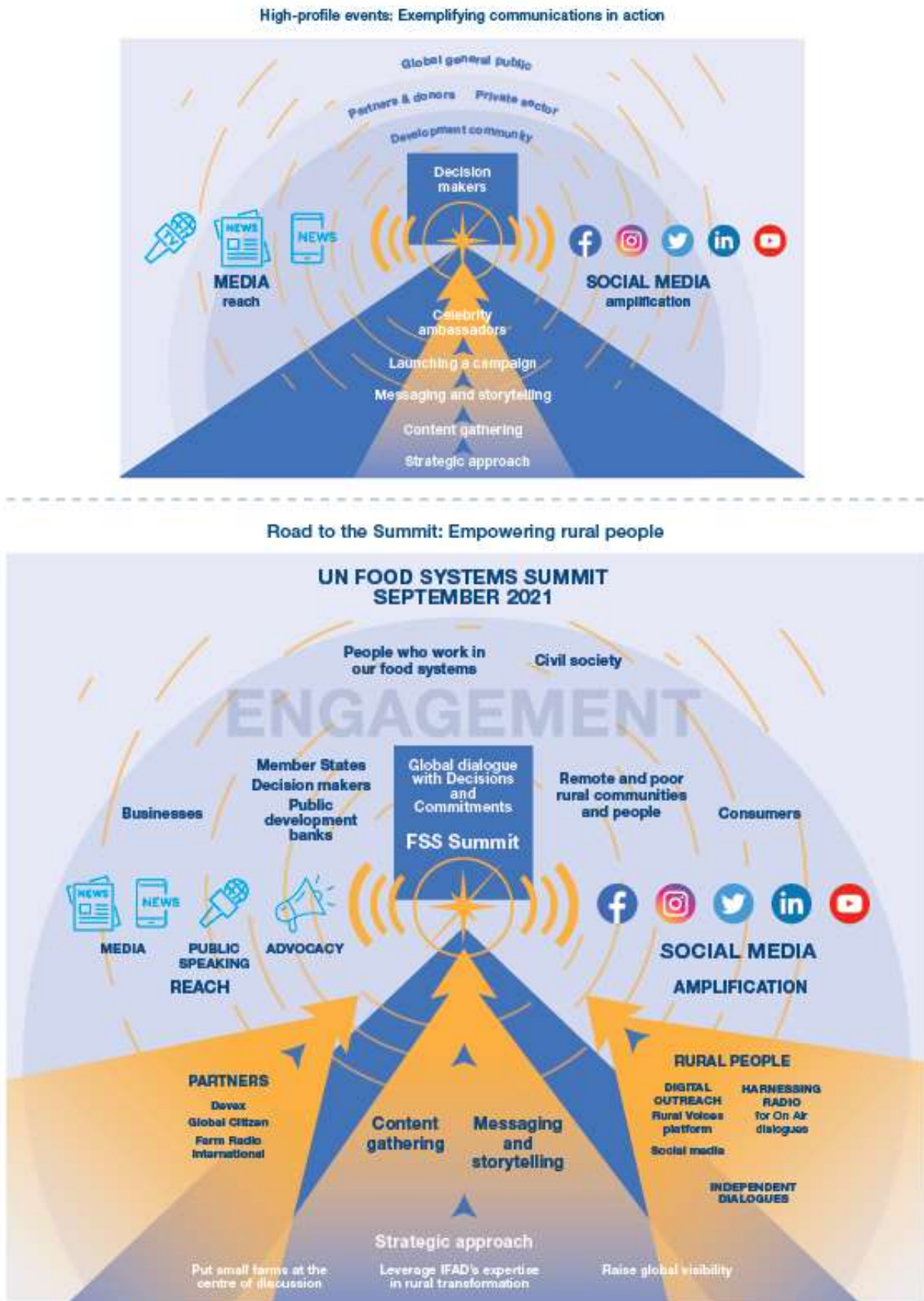
**As an amplifier and catalyst, fostering desired actions by target audiences is always the aim of strategic communication.**

4. Corporate communication, which includes both external and internal communications strategies, is the overarching instrument in an organization's toolkit that delivers those messages to the right people, at the right times and in the right ways. These strategic communication functions, when implemented by experienced professionals, are what get the job done.
5. Global engagement through public advocacy to increase IFAD's visibility among broad audiences compliments political advocacy undertaken by other IFAD divisions through direct engagement with decision makers. The two are distinct but mutually supporting.
6. Effective corporate communication units include internal communication, campaigns and advocacy, marketing, brand management, media relations, web and social media and publishing. They also include communications tools such as videos, infographics, press releases, podcasts, publications and speeches. But most importantly, effective corporate communications is strategic, considering communications in all aspects of the organization's work. The aim is to use communications strategically as an amplifier and catalyst, fostering desired actions by engaging target audiences in our cause so that they feel impelled to embrace

our purpose and work. It also means managing the organization's reputation as it builds its profile, and managing risks.

7. Broadly our audiences are:
  - (i) Member States and decision makers
  - (ii) Multilateral institutions
  - (iii) Private sector
  - (iv) Media
  - (v) Civil society and broader general public (specifically youth and women)
  - (vi) Supporters and influencers
  - (vii) IFAD staff
8. Each needs to be approached and targeted differently and can be powerful action takers for our purpose. Starting in IFAD12, the institution will implement a plan to reach tens of millions more people, double the impact of its projects by 2030, and aim for systemic change through policy engagement with governments. The institution's plan includes a greater focus on mainstreaming themes to reach the most vulnerable rural people and countries with surgical precision and attention to cross-cutting issues and enabling factors. Additionally, senior management is making needed changes throughout the institution which involve all employees, include a new financial architecture and much more resource mobilization.
9. To support these initiatives we will widen our scope and ensure IFAD's communications approach generates a broader based awareness with strategic partnerships, targeted external advocacy and marketing tactics as well as impactful employee communications that spark loyalty and staff engagement.

Figure 1  
High-profile events: Exemplifying communications in action



## **B. “Street recognition”**

10. We have a perfect opportunity today, given the global context and growing awareness surrounding climate concerns, food systems and health, to take our call to action to fund rural development for a stronger future into the global grassroots narrative. The more our messages are echoed through and by the public at large, and youth in particular, our own ambitions will be that much easier to fulfill. Indeed our Member States and key stakeholders will feel that supporting IFAD is supporting the concerns of their own constituents. “Street recognition” will also be key in order to generate staff engagement, which will in turn add to IFAD’s visibility at an external level.

## **C. Inspiring our workforce**

11. IFAD staff are the key to its success – all things rest on their creativity, innovativeness, enthusiasm, loyalty and engagement. Impactful employee communication, therefore, plays a strategic role in establishing a climate of trust, building understanding, sharing knowledge, generating excitement and galvanizing IFAD’s workforce together toward a shared vision.
12. As IFAD continues the implementation of its ambitious reform agenda for growth, it will create a more comprehensive and robust employee communication function and approach that will include furthering institutional understanding of the critical role and purpose of internal communications, introducing tools and updated guidelines and strategies that support employee engagement in an increasingly decentralized environment, while working to more effectively bridge internal and external communications in order to build staff awareness of the role they play in supporting IFAD’s visibility and brand.
13. Just like other stakeholders, IFAD employees can be active advocates with the right internal communications messages. Our goal should be that most staff identify as brand advocates and naturally look to take action, from posting on social media to talking about IFAD’s mission with their family, friends and networks – beyond their day-to-day responsibilities – with passion and pride.

## **II. Moving forward strategically with urgency**

### **A. Advancing IFAD’s positioning and brand**

14. As stated recently by both the UN Secretary-General and IFAD’s President: “We must address 21st century challenges – epic geopolitical tensions, the climate crisis (...) – with 21st century solutions.” IFAD offers solutions to 21st century problems. We need to show it with a focused communications approach. In fact, we have escalated our efforts to create a narrative that shows the need to scale up rural development as a key pathway to address global concerns such as climate change, a healthier world, and the accomplishment of the 2030 Agenda. This has gotten increasing recognition in the media and with our key stakeholders. By applying strategic approaches to media engagement, the number of articles referencing IFAD in national, regional and global media (newspapers, television, radio and online) reached record levels in 2020.
15. One of the reasons is that our communication continues to be focused on the people behind our projects and, beyond that, how rural communities matter to our audiences’ own future and that of their families. This trend and increased visibility is an indication of both the success of our approach and a growing interest in issues concerning small-scale producers, food systems, agriculture and rural development – IFAD’s work and mandate – more broadly around the world. Needless to say, the communications work we do is informed by and in collaboration with departments across IFAD. To ride the wave of growing public interest we now need to ramp up our approach. Using our communication to generate awareness, empathy and support for all of our causes is key because



communicating with a purpose means more than disseminating information – it’s about engaging your audiences and building commitment to your cause.

- 16. There are three main elements behind cause communications which we will use to direct our strategic approach.

Table 1  
Lead the Narrative

<p><b>Lead the Narrative</b></p> <p>Be the leading voice on rural development ensuring we link it to how it plays into solutions for a better world</p> <p><b>1</b></p>	<p><b>HOW?</b></p> <p>Use authoritative information to spread knowledge</p> <p>Show IFAD's vision, impact and effectiveness</p> <p>Build credibility, trust and familiarity by utilizing IFAD's UN identity and its values</p> <p>Speak out in a timely and principled manner using powerful messaging</p>	<p><b>TACTICS:</b></p> <p><b>Generate news</b> – create and share innovative content through our multiple channels and through strategic media outreach</p> <p><b>Lead on data, science and solutions</b> – produce and generate authoritative reports, publications, expert interviews etc.</p> <p><b>Be a thought leader</b> – become a recognized and trusted voice by proactively taking positions, showing initiative and promoting new ideas</p>	<p><b>RESULT:</b></p> <p><b>PEOPLE KNOW.</b></p> <p>IFAD is positioned as a leading voice on global issues in relation to rural development, providing concrete solutions for a better world.</p>
<p><b>Connect with people, make it personal</b></p> <p>Show why this matters. Forge an emotive connection between individuals and our shared global challenges.</p> <p><b>2</b></p>	<p><b>HOW?</b></p> <p>Use impactful, clear and bold messages that resonate and stick</p> <p>Build empathy through memorable, hopeful, people-centred stories</p> <p>Use influencers to connect, inspire and emphasize shared values</p> <p>Highlight progress and solidarity and demonstrate solutions</p> <p>Reach target audiences on platforms they use</p>	<p><b>TACTICS:</b></p> <p><b>Focus on storytelling</b> – create human-centred stories that illustrate a wider problem and how it can be overcome</p> <p><b>Optimize production</b> – develop distinct content for each platform and target audience</p> <p><b>Encourage engagement</b> – launch targeted global campaigns, strong outreach and initiate strategic partnerships to have a multiplier effect</p>	<p><b>RESULT:</b></p> <p><b>PEOPLE ENGAGE.</b></p> <p>Our growing audiences are drawn to our content and actively engaging with our causes. They not only feel compassion for the people we serve, but feel connected to our core underlying raison d'être.</p>
<p><b>Mobilize action</b></p> <p>Inspire audiences to feel possibility and mobilize them to act</p> <p><b>3</b></p>	<p><b>HOW?</b></p> <p>Motivate through stories of local solutions</p> <p>Offer avenues for change to movements and civil society</p> <p>Provide ideas for individual action</p> <p>Build partnerships to extend impact</p> <p>Make a case for financial support to IFAD</p>	<p><b>TACTICS:</b></p> <p><b>Highlight solutions</b> – use examples of how our world's problems are being fixed</p> <p><b>Offer hope</b> – create reasons for optimism</p> <p><b>Call for action</b> – point to blueprints (i.e. SDGs, climate science, peace plans) and funding needs</p>	<p><b>RESULT:</b></p> <p><b>PEOPLE ACT.</b></p> <p>Our audiences feel possibility, agency and the desire to make a difference. Policies shift, change happens.</p>

- 17. The IFAD 2021-2024 operating priorities and plans will comprise the foundation for the actual messages, media activities, products and target audiences to be developed in line with this strategic vision.

18. The support of IFAD Member States will be essential as we move forward with this vision to:
  - (i) Take guided steps toward positioning IFAD as a thought leader, based on the principles of cause communications as indicated above.
  - (ii) Make communications a strategic priority as it redefines itself and boldly moves forward with its decentralization ambitions.
  - (iii) Significantly expand our external advocacy mandate and innovative marketing approaches to further collaborations and partnerships across all sectors, which is fundamental to growing our global engagement.
19. The underlying premise is that IFAD's Members will want to see IFAD front and centre in the agricultural development and financial sectors, known as a thought leader for progressive policy and practice, and selected as a first choice for engagement and investment by countries, development institutions, foundations and the private sector . This will not only increase IFAD's visibility but also contribute to our ultimate goal of putting rural lives at the heart of the global narrative.

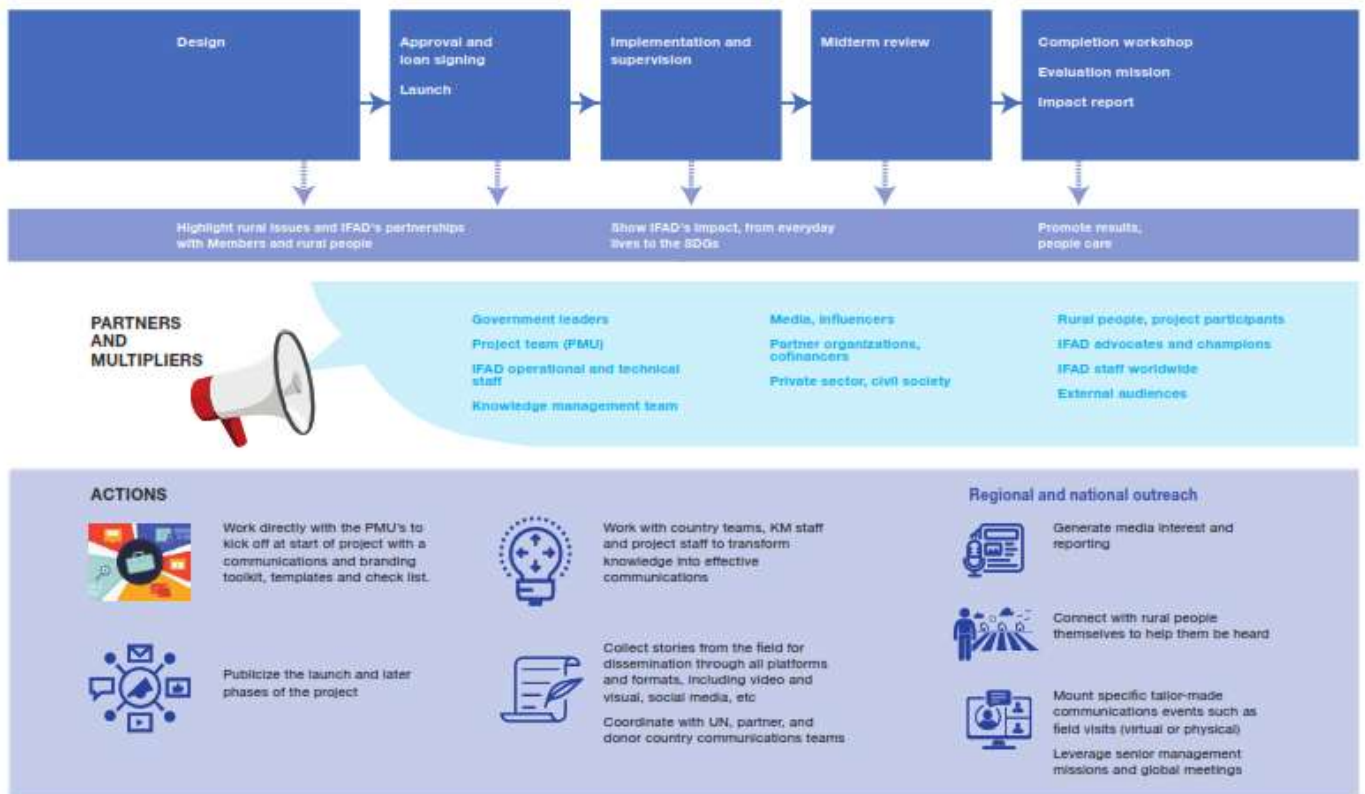
**Investing in communications and global engagement moves us forward in IFAD12 and beyond, understanding that visibility is an investment that pays off in dividends which allow us to do our work with exponential impact.**

### **III. Going forward – communications in action**

#### **A. Decentralization**

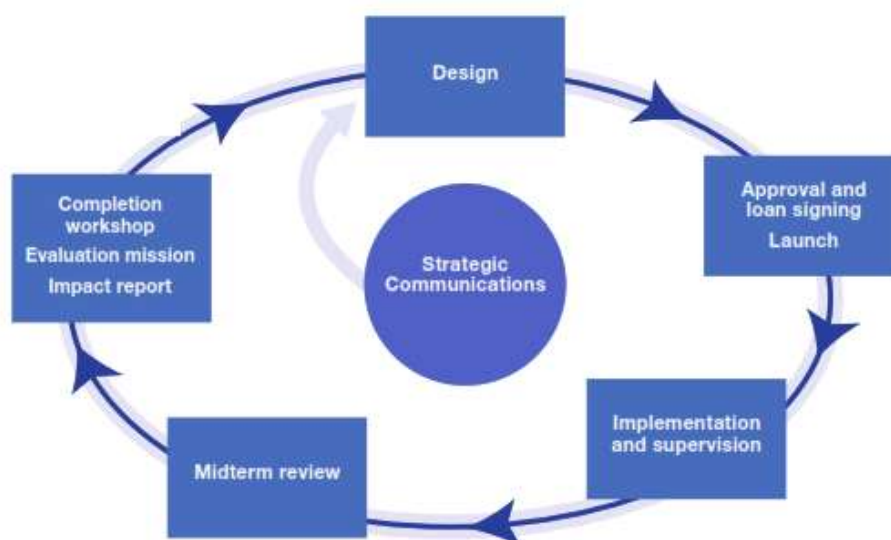
20. The implementation of IFAD's decentralization 2.0 plan will see the proportion of IFAD staff in the field rise to 45 per cent by 2023. A main focus will be to capitalize on decentralization to get closer both to our key stakeholders on the ground, including the people who benefit from our work directly; amplifying their voices, telling their stories, and drawing them into a dialogue with policy makers, leaders, as well as the global public. This in turn will help establish IFAD in the global narrative and directly show why our presence on the ground matters while furthering the impact of our operations.
21. The human element and people's stories are an important lever to start dialogues with target audiences and partners, and are at the heart of our strategic communication approach as we accompany decentralization and implementation of IFAD12. Evidence and results from projects are also key to demonstrating the contribution that IFAD's work makes to rural development and global goals as a whole.
22. Strategic communications helps build strong partnerships locally and globally, project IFAD's brand and comparative advantage, and build the capacity of staff in the field to be effective communicators on behalf of IFAD.
23. We work in line with IFAD's rigorous Results Management Framework, and technical and financial experts across divisions who gather evidence of the results of IFAD's investments, lessons learned and knowledge generated from the field. As we expand and deepen our ties, it is crucial that strategic communications and public advocacy work even more closely with these staff – and at the onset – to position IFAD strategically and advise accordingly. This further strengthens the informed and compelling narratives we need to deliver strongly on our comparative advantage.

Figure 2  
**Communications during the project lifecycle**



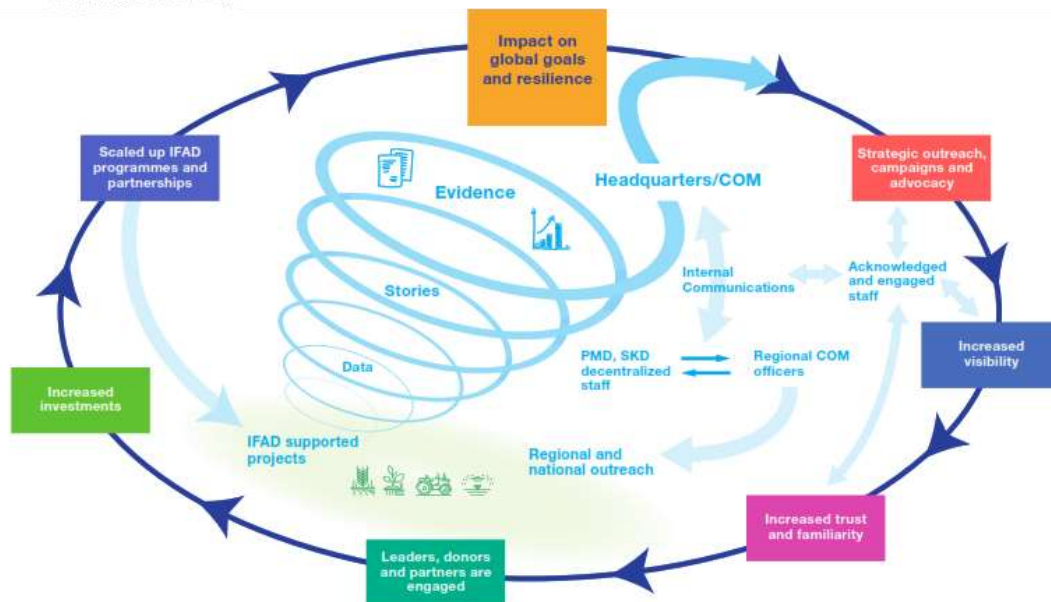
24. The Communications Division’s Business Process Review in fact recognizes this cycle where decentralized communications experts located in regional and country offices work closely with IFAD operations and technical staff engaged in implementation, M&E and knowledge management, to transform evidence, data and stories into impactful communications for visibility. This cyclical process is critical to decentralization moving forward.

Figure 3  
**Involving communications from the start: Strengthening collaboration with internal partner**



25. This content stream is also channelled to headquarters and throughout the organization to inform global communications strategies and outreach. At the same time, the overall strategic corporate goals and links to global issues are communicated outward to decentralized offices through internal communications to inform and contextualize communications on the ground. This ensures that IFAD presents a consistent brand, and underscores for our audiences that IFAD's field-level achievements also further international efforts toward global goals.

Figure 4

**Strategic communications for increased visibility and investment**

26. Internal communications will support the activation of a global, interconnected team as part of the D2.0 process. This means reinventing the ways in which we interact at the internal level, from an HQ-centred to a more horizontal, decentralized communication. Field-based communication staff can move quickly to gather intelligence from the field to share with staff and management at headquarters, while also building relationships in countries with project staff and partner organizations. The headquarters team in turn adapts, amplifies and relays these messages and evidence to global audiences and decision makers.
27. It is critical that decentralization be about the people we serve – stories and content have to be adaptable to different platforms, audiences, and markets. When fully elaborated, the communications network can most effectively exploit the opportunities to harvest evidence and stories showing the value of IFAD's work and amplify it worldwide. Decentralization is a transformative opportunity that goes hand in hand with communications visibility with a purpose.
28. This is a multi-pronged and coordinated effort through various channels to reach key stakeholders and the public. IFAD's approach to each of these pathways will be deepened and expanded, as described below, to drive visibility around priority themes in global conversations.

#### IV. Priority themes

29. If we believe that rural people must be at the heart of global development, we need to connect the urgent need to address their issues to global debates. If we have learned one thing from the pandemic, it is that issues of vulnerability and resilience – which have always been at the core of IFAD's work with rural people – are now globally seen as urgent issues.

30. It is important to remember that programmatic priorities are also things that people care about – climate change, poverty, food and nutrition, and women’s empowerment, for example, all have taken a larger share of public attention in a world racked by COVID-19, where the marginalized have suffered the most. If we define vulnerability as the challenge these issues present, then we can frame the solution around two overarching themes:
- (i) **Resilience** can be an overarching priority theme into which some of these issues are integrated. This has many benefits: It fits with the way IFAD works holistically to transform rural areas, coordinating action to address multiple challenges rural people face; and resilience is already a headline theme of the IFAD12 replenishment period.
  - (ii) **Inclusion** can be an umbrella theme that encompasses women’s empowerment, the need for equity in access to resources and finance, and overcoming marginalization for groups such as youth, indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities. It reflects the post-COVID consensus that the gap between the haves and have-nots, between producers and consumers, needs to be closed.
31. The IFAD 2021-2024 operating priorities and plans will be a foundation for specific messages, media, activities, campaigns, products, events and target audiences. In particular, global communications will look at strategies, reinforced with new critical functions that cast a stronger and wider net.

## A. Turning themes into messages

32. Underlying our messages will be these key principles:
- (i) **Remind people that agriculture and rural development are essential to achieving SDGs 1 and 2** and contribute to reduced levels of tension and armed conflict locally and ultimately globally.
  - (ii) **Spotlight resilience and sustainability** during the COVID-19 pandemic and other shocks, and highlighting sustainable agriculture and climate adaptation and mitigation.
  - (iii) **Demonstrate IFAD’s transformative impact** on small-scale producers and entrepreneurs and their communities, not just through finance but behaviour change and social empowerment, including gender equality, and opportunities for youth and persons with disabilities.
  - (iv) **Tell human stories that offer hope, that tell the impact of IFAD support on people’s lives, and letting** project participants speak for themselves, and positioning staff as experts who can talk authoritatively about IFAD’s impact .
  - (v) **Simplify development themes into highly salient and less complex messaging.** Even when IFAD programmes and positions are complex, it is our responsibility to condense and communicate them in ways that are easy for audiences to digest. Stakeholders must easily comprehend the message in order to figure out how to take action.
  - (vi) **When we reach the right audiences with the right tools, using innovative approaches and tactics,** we achieve a greater impact in terms of visibility, connecting our themes to stories of rural people, and inspiring our audiences to act.

## V. Conclusion

33. Due to its record of accomplishment spanning decades, IFAD has built strong trust and familiarity among governments, partners and rural communities. IFAD’s



mandate is more relevant than ever, and it plays a key part in achieving the 2030 Agenda.

34. As it seeks to grow and double its impact by 2030, IFAD needs to expand and deepen its communications approaches to reach the next level. While the centrality of rural development to eliminating poverty and hunger and building global resilience is increasingly recognized, IFAD cannot assume that its unique mandate and the good work that it does in this area will be as well. In fact, to be part of the growing global narrative around rural development, food systems, resilience and adaptation to climate change, IFAD must make a conscious shift from thinking about communications as an on-demand service or episodic activity to envisioning it as an integral, continuous and strategic function that is part of achieving the Fund's highest goals.
35. **This is visibility with a purpose, a collective commitment and definite choice.** It is a prerequisite to the three key aspects of cause communications: Leading the narrative, connecting with people and galvanizing them to action.
36. The underlying premise is that IFAD's Members will want to see IFAD front and centre in the agricultural development and financial sectors, known as a thought leader for progressive policy and practice, and selected as a first choice for engagement and investment by countries, development institutions, foundations and the private sector. This will not only increase IFAD's visibility but also contribute to our ultimate goal of putting rural lives at the heart of the global narrative.
37. Through Member State consultations, independent evaluations, and consulting firm studies, it has become evident that communications is central to answering the question on how to deliver this vision. We are responding to IFAD's needs by reorganizing in a more strategic way and we have laid out an action plan for how to get there. There is an investment of time and resources required to meet IFAD and Member States' ambition for global visibility and engagement – but when we become more visible we will better serve the people we support and we can mobilize resources to further our critical mission.
38. Our global communications and engagement strategic approach outlines the key directions that we will take as IFAD scales-up its operations, decentralizes to get closer to the people it serves, and develops its financial model and innovative solutions accordingly.
39. **The visibility we will bring is key to succeeding in achieving these ambitious goals.** Our footprint and structure must continue evolving and expanding, and to this end, we will be changing the division's name to "Global Communications and Public Advocacy" to reflect our growing mandate.
40. The support of IFAD Member States will be essential as we move forward with this vision to:
  - (i) Make communications a strategic priority and partner across IFAD, as it redefines itself and boldly moves forward with its decentralization ambitions.
  - (ii) Significantly expand our external advocacy mandate and innovative marketing approaches to further collaborations and partnerships across all sectors, which is fundamental to growing our global engagement.
  - (iii) Take guided steps toward positioning IFAD as a thought leader, based on the principles of cause communications as indicated above.
  - (iv) Monitor and evaluate our outreach and initiatives to ensure we are delivering results and impact that are in line with expectations.
41. This communication and global engagement strategic approach will accompany IFAD's overall ambition to be closer to the peoples of the world and create a new

dynamic where the rural people we serve are at the heart of the sustainable solutions that IFAD delivers.

## **VI. Acknowledgements**

42. This strategic approach draws from multiple sources including interviews and consultations with comparator organizations (GFATM, UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP), internal consultations (regional directors, hub/country directors, COM officers and members of the IFAD Staff Association), in addition to other external consultations with private sector partners (Olam and Mars), NGO partners (Oxfam) and others.

## **Key action areas**

### **A. Embracing a digital future**

1. The world has learned a lot from the coronavirus pandemic, not the least of which has been how to exist, thrive and prosper in an increasingly digital environment. IFAD too, is fully embracing its digital future and placing digital communications at the centre of its visibility and advocacy strategy – from virtual field trips, interactive conference platforms, podcasts and e-newsletters, to high-engagement enhancements to IFAD’s corporate website and social media channels.
2. As part of our approach, we will undertake an in-depth redesign and restructuring of ifad.org with the aim of repositioning the corporate website as a central hub with visually impactful design, enhanced storytelling, improved multilingual functionalities and stronger engagement through the use of interactive digital products.
3. In support of IFAD’s decentralization agenda, we will develop a sustainable digital framework that outlines roles, responsibilities and accountability for IFAD’s websites, social media channels and other digital based products, laying the foundation for IFAD’s digital presence at the regional and country level while helping to advance our goal to reach more people by meeting them where they are, in the languages they speak and with localized content. Where possible, we will engage with strategic communications partners to achieve these visibility aims, leveraging their valuable expertise to further our digital ambitions.
4. We will continue to explore new ways of growing corporate social media channels and deepening engagement with key audiences, using social media monitoring and listening tools to inform and guide tactics with robust data.
5. Increased use of social media graphic design and video content will be fundamental to effectively implement this approach and enable IFAD to lead the narrative, connect with audiences and mobilize action.

### **B. Expanding our reach**

6. Media will play a critical role in building IFAD visibility, brand familiarity and thought leadership. With strategic targeting of media outlets, active engagement at high-level global events, clear and relevant messaging linked to newsworthy developments and global issues, in addition to celebrity and influencer support, IFAD can become a leading voice on rural development through a growing media footprint.
7. During the IFAD12 period, we will continue to identify and target media outlets and journalists who can help influence key decision makers and reach particular audiences. This will include support from specialized media consultants in key countries who will monitor media narratives and identify opportunities for proactively pitching IFAD’s storyline and expertise.
8. Leveraging our enhanced field presence and closer relationships with operational and project staff, we will offer media trips specifically tailored to witnessing IFAD’s work and key thematics on the ground; invite Member State ambassadors and other officials posted in-country to participate in field visits to IFAD-supported projects; work with regional directors and country directors to increase their profiles and communication effectiveness, including with the media; while expanding the reach of regional social media channels to boost engagement in borrowing countries and among donor.
9. In order to generate news, the development of fresh data and original research will be critical in our efforts to position IFAD as an authoritative, relevant voice that is willing to take a strong position on key issues. Just as connecting journalists to eloquent and inspiring project participants who can provide them with first-hand insights will personalize the development challenges and solutions and make



people care about the issues. Increased interactions with staff in IFAD-supported projects will include story gathering and training/capacity-building. We want to ensure content is developed that will be adaptable for both local and international media markets. In short, decentralized media outreach should be part of an overarching global media strategy.

### **C. Energizing IFAD’s brand: Campaigns and outreach**

10. Continuous innovation is key to expanding and even maintaining IFAD’s brand and engagement with its stakeholders.
11. In addition to advocacy, campaigns are strong communications tools for brand awareness and messaging. In the past IFAD has created brand campaigns (e.g. The Field Report) and will continue to build on its brand work and thematic campaigns around gender, youth and climate (#RecipesforChange) to increase IFAD’s brand recognition with the public.
12. IFAD will increase its commitment to campaigns, around key events like the Food Systems Summit and COP meetings, where COVID-19 has fast-forwarded transition to digital and virtual discussion spaces and just to keep up, and be able to offer compelling, highly professional and impactful content and experiences to audiences implies investments in technology, human resources, skills and capacity. To get its story out in this environment, IFAD will create content that is more visual, more design-savvy, incorporating more video and compelling imagery, for example.
13. On the technical side, data visualization will evolve so that IFAD presents its results and key numbers in easily graspable and telling ways. Publications will become more engaging and digitally focused, with more interactive and visual approaches to content across the board – visual storytelling with a people focus that builds a strong connection with audiences to impel them to care and act. With almost half of the staff in the field, the decentralized environment will also mean that IFAD will need to train and sensitize staff on promoting and protecting IFAD’s brand. New platforms and tools will be created to build staff awareness and engagement both at HQ and field levels: a restructured intranet, an internal social media sharing platform, a newsletter to get IFAD even closer to all of its staff. Internal communications will focus on creating a new generation of strong IFAD champions.

### **D. Growing our advocacy base**

14. We have seen first hand the impact that successful celebrity engagement and advocacy efforts can have – by engaging influencers like Idris and Sabrina Elba, Mr Eazi, and Sherrie Silver. Thanks to them, we have gained public awareness at unprecedented levels and we will continue growing that portfolio. Additionally, going forward, IFAD will grow our network of supporters beyond celebrity ambassadors as we look to engage a broader base of known influencers. We will also look to engage energized youth and citizen advocates as champions for change.

**Growing our advocacy base involves more than just reaching target audiences with tailored messages – we also want them to feel invested in the solution, empowered to make change, and positively reinforced when they take action.**

15. Internally, we will also be looking to strengthen our advocacy base by creating new communications toolkits to enable Board members, and our partners, and ourselves as staff to join in championing IFAD. Recognizing that advocates have needs help us better market to them, making engaging with IFAD a meaningful and rewarding experience. This outcome will help us achieve IFAD’s goal of being more visible with a brand that our community connects to. Ultimately, we want people to

know who IFAD is, and in our ambition in being more public-facing will help us pivot to the public as we appeal for broader resources and support in the future.

### **E. Forging new partnerships**

16. Partnerships with like-minded leaders, including strategic communications partnerships, will enable IFAD to leverage platforms and markets offering an exponential increase in reach.
17. Our approach should be inclusive of organizations offering a range of resources and expertise, from civil society groups to nongovernmental organizations, from private sector companies to foundations. We will look at both traditional partners as well as non-traditional communications for revolutionary reach and impact. For example, Global Citizen can support on key campaign and advocacy efforts, using their unique ability to leverage relationships with key leaders, and incorporate IFAD into their events, such as their Global Citizen Festival, which attract audiences in the millions. They can also help to engage the private sector to work with IFAD. As a connector, Global Citizen can help us establish relationships with leading communications companies who are like-minded and able to offer resources including but not limited to cause marketing campaigns, grants, and in-kind donations.
18. The SDG2 Advocacy Hub could also be a supportive partner. COM will continue to develop new partnerships with media and technology companies (e.g. Thomson Reuters Foundation, France24, TikTok, Instagram).
19. Essential to our approach is close coordination with the GPR private sector engagement team on current and new campaign partnerships, including Food Tank, Alliance to End Hunger, the UN Foundation, and others, that include both cause funding with citizens and brand visibility opportunities for IFAD; some examples being explored include Aldo Group with the UN Goodwill Ambassadors and others.

### **F. How do we get there?**

20. In order to attract and retain high-level communications partnerships, we will need to be strategic and innovative in our collaborations, delivering creative solutions in parallel with exceptional stewardship; including service to partners, relationship management, and impactful reporting.
21. In order to be successful, an internal, collaborative approach will be required both within communications and across other IFAD divisions and teams. Together, we will help attract new partners who have innovative approaches and technical expertise relevant to IFAD's mission and mandate, in addition to traditional communications activities such as marketing, media relations, and fundraising.
22. We will also need to streamline smaller initiatives and partnership opportunities into our priority thematic campaigns: I Fund Agricultural Development, and "Recovery, Rebuilding, Resilience". We will need to develop unique partner messages that complement these established organizational communication priorities by creating global partnership communications guidelines. In doing so, we will spread ourselves less thin and maximize key moments, including the UN Food Systems Summit, General Assembly week, and COP26, and we will be consistent in our collaborative messaging efforts.
23. In moving into developing communications partnerships, we want to be strategic in leveraging IFAD's messaging and global engagement for innovative partnerships across multiple sectors. The goal is to raise awareness of IFAD as both an international financial institution and a UN agency, and advocate for global development as a prerequisite to resilience – we need to position IFAD as the answer to the issues at hand. A solutions-based approach to partnerships will engage our target audiences in feeling positive that they can impact change.

## **G. Strengthening internal competencies: Thought leadership and engagement**

24. To establish IFAD as a thought leader, senior managers, experts and field staff who are called upon to take part in public events including media interviews, will receive specialized training to deliver simple, quotable and memorable messages. This means stressing both up-to-date data and evidence and storytelling approaches that show, rather than describe, the impact of IFAD's work, engaging audiences on both intellectual and emotional levels.
25. Training, especially of field staff in a decentralized context, is essential to be able to cultivate engagement with key audiences, going beyond intermittent, event-based or inward-looking communications. As IFAD sees increased visibility and "traffic" in global discussions of sustainable development and furthers its leadership role in regards to rural areas, key staff such as country directors will need to both engage more consistently and be prepared to speak authoritatively and respond to media inquiries and reputational issues.
26. As IFAD expands its financial model and the products it offers, as well as deepening its involvement with the private sector, staff in financial and other areas will need to increase their communications and their skills. This is already happening, for example in communications support for presentations related to the ongoing cultivation of potential investors.
27. Both real-world and digital platforms will be important in a post-COVID world to enhance IFAD's thought leadership. From participating in virtual panels to interacting on up-and-coming platforms, IFAD leadership should be poised to capitalize on what is trending and where we need to go to get our messages heard and amplified.

## **H. Internal communication, a game changer**

28. Impactful internal communications approaches will not only be key to the successful implementation of IFAD's ambitious reform agenda but also play a critical role in supporting IFAD's external visibility and engagement.
29. Fully integrated into our Strategic Communications Approach, internal communications will be:
  - (i) **Strategic**, by restructuring the tools, platforms and channels to convey internal messages in an innovative, accessible and transparent way. We will work on making the vision behind the reforms clear and simple to understand for all IFAD personnel. One of the key milestones will focus on the intranet redesign to make it more efficient and strategic.
  - (ii) **Integrated and outward-looking**, by strengthening the collaboration with other COM units. Internal communications can boost external visibility through staff engagement but also inspire campaigns and highlight IFAD's mission by acknowledging our personnel's efforts and achievements. A new internal social media sharing platform will be launched to enable to become an IFAD champion easily.
  - (iii) **Dynamic**, by adapting to IFAD's evolving reality, especially decentralization D2.0. New ways of communicating will emerge, as we support the activation of IFAD's decentralized global team.
  - (iv) **Two-way**, by strengthening our constant dialogue with other departments and divisions, as well as IFAD's staff and the Staff Association. We will complement the existing feedback opportunities where gaps are identified to ensure that everyone is heard for a truly collaborative approach.

**I. Crisis communications and reputational risk management**

30. The Communications Division must factor in IFAD's reputation and assessing risk – whether for a position we take on an emerging humanitarian crisis or a potential partnership.
31. Managing risk is about how we do our work. As IFAD becomes a more prominent brand we will have to consider this more and more (with visibility comes scrutiny), and thus the need to ensure IFAD's mission, role and values are correctly depicted.
32. Monitoring and evaluation is critical to a results-based approach to communications that is aligned with IFAD's solutions-oriented mandate. This means we are doing our due diligence – we are clearly identifying standards, key performance indicators, benchmarks for success, reassessing our approaches and tactics, and collecting data that will inform our progress.

## Implementing the strategic approach

We know we want visibility with a purpose – but how does an ambitious strategic approach get implemented?

### A. Our vision in motion

1. This Strategic Communications Approach has outlined how we plan to communicate IFAD's mission, brand and results in compelling ways.
2. This also requires a clear plan for implementing the proposed actions, including how COM will reorient itself to work with partners across the house to achieve IFAD's communications goals.

#### (a) Overarching objectives

- Complement and coordinate with the broader organizational goals.
- Maximize return on investment of time and resources.
- Collaborate both within communications and across divisions to achieve outcomes.
- Cultivate strong and lasting relationships and build a strong organizational reputation.
- Aligning with IFAD's reform agenda, identify needs for increased impact.

#### (b) Target audiences

- Member States
- IFAD staff
- General public
- UN agencies and NGO leaders
- Primary partners: private sector and foundations
- Journalists and influencers

#### (c) Tactics

- (i) Web and digital:
  - In-depth redesign and restructuring of ifad.org with the aim of repositioning the corporate website as a digital hub with impactful design, storytelling and improved multilingual functionality.
  - Develop a digital framework that outlines standards for IFAD's websites, social media channels and other digital based products, laying a foundation for IFAD's digital presence at the regional and country level.
  - Ramp up social media activities and use social listening tools to guide and inform tactics, while deepening audience engagement through campaigns and supportive partnerships.
  - Increase use of high-engagement social media graphic design and video content, enabling IFAD to lead the narrative, connect with audiences and mobilize action.

(ii) Media relations:

- Decentralize media relations efforts so that staff, supported by a network of media and story-gathering consultants, are more familiar with IFAD's work on the ground and can generate strong human-interest stories that demonstrate the impact of IFAD's investments, and build stronger relationships with local journalists and other partners who can amplify IFAD's messages.
- Create news by developing fresh data, original research, and media-focused events.
- Establish IFAD spokespeople as reliable, available experts and strong thought leaders that media can call on for commentary on relevant topics and events. Through messaging training, IFAD experts will be able to effectively communicate their strong and authoritative positions.
- Organize regular press trips with influential target media (international, regional and local) which connect IFAD's work on the ground to the news agenda, to give journalists direct access to project participants and IFAD experts, and to familiarize them with IFAD's work on the ground.
- Monitor and evaluate the quality and quantity of media coverage and share results with relevant stakeholders.

(iii) Branding and content:

- Clearly define what imagery we want instantly associated with IFAD's brand, invest in gathering content, and weave these efforts into all communications materials.
- Through decentralization, cultivate content for storytelling, including visual storytelling, while guiding efforts to streamline this process and raise awareness of the communications toolkit, branding and messaging guidelines.
- In collaboration with other divisions, develop additional multilingual materials to explain IFAD's mission and mandate to our various target audiences.
- Capitalize on associating IFAD's brand with public educational opportunities to exponentially increase our visibility, including through development partnerships and youth programmes.

(iv) Innovation and partnerships:

- Create a strategic innovation and communications partnerships workstream to build and steward relationships that help achieve visibility and awareness of IFAD's mission.
- Develop communications components to current partnerships in tandem with building new strategic communications partnerships that capitalize on partners' expertise and resources.
- Leverage networks, including Global Citizen, film festivals, and the UN Food Systems Summit to connect to prospects familiar and friendly to IFAD, such as Aldo Group and Verizon.

- Utilize staff networks to connect to influencers who can make the right introductions at the right levels to prospects, such as CanopyLAB, Disney, and others.
  - Create partnership best practices in communications standards to guide messaging to be consistent with key IFAD campaign communication messaging.
- (v) Staff engagement:
- Thought leadership: offer communications and media trainings, especially for field staff to be able to speak with authority on IFAD positions.
  - Research and identify opportunities to engage senior IFAD leadership in meaningful and impactful thought leadership opportunities, including virtual panels and conferences.
  - Strengthen and broaden the ongoing consultation process with IFAD's different departments, divisions, units and teams – both at HQ and on the field – as well as IFAD personnel/Staff Association, to ensure cross-cutting collaboration is designed in a participative way and implemented collaboratively.
  - Restructure and create a number of crucial tools for strategic and two-way communication: a redesign of the intranet to be more strategic and functional and launching new tools to facilitate staff information and engagement, including IFADnow, social media sharing platform.
  - Support IFAD's main reform processes, including D2.0, in an innovative way; through communications trainings with multimedia contents designed to make change understandable and accessible to all and decentralized event and field-to-field dialogues where HQ gets a chance to reposition itself as an equal par.<sup>1</sup>
  - Collaborate to strengthen the integration of internal and external communication: we will include a strong staff engagement component in the promotion of all future campaigns, and will give visibility to IFAD's personnel at the external level by including staff human stories in our external content.
- (vi) Crisis communications and reputational risk management:
- Review and update crisis communications and risk management procedures and guidelines to ensure continued protection of IFAD's public image.
  - Monitor, assess and make recommendations to the President and Senior Management for situations involving a high reputational risk for IFAD, such as failures to meet the Fund's ethical or technical standards, political crisis, natural disasters or other factors which may impact the way the Fund operates.

---

<sup>1</sup> Note: Although an internal communications approach and action plan has been created in support of D2.0, a more comprehensive internal communications strategy will be developed in the coming months in close collaboration and consultation with internal divisions, working groups, the KM team and Staff Association.

- Establish mechanisms within the Communications Division for handling media inquiries in consultation with concerned IFAD divisions.
  - Input to staff trainings and internal campaigns to ensure an understanding of individual responsibility to safeguard IFAD's reputation.
3. All of these workstreams as outlined have one overarching streamlined approach to prioritize decision-making:
- **Issues:** we evaluate the issues and look for opportunities.
  - **Impact:** we assess and forecast their impacts.
  - **Action:** we inform recommended actions with this critical thinking.

The result is increased visibility.

## **B. What it looks like: A scalable model for implementation**

4. Ultimately, we know that visibility with a purpose needs to be adaptable, able to mirror the organization's priorities in response to a shifting global landscape. We also know that while increasing our global communications impact requires a bigger footprint, in a constrained environment it also means using available resources adaptively and efficiently.
5. So to summarize, and as stated above, our strategy highlights three concrete steps:
- (i) Reorganizing the division in response to IFAD's agenda for growth and need for increased visibility in donor and operational countries.
  - (ii) Delivering on this expanded global approach will require additional resources, so we are proposing a scalable model that can be phased in over time.
  - (iii) Aligning our strategic approach with the recommendations of the BPR and the McKinsey study and through the Dynamic Workforce Planning Exercise.
6. IFAD's Communications Division will be reorganized into a more efficient and targeted configuration for delivering on this approach and action plan and changing our name to reflect this transformation. This will be a model with two primary teams: corporate communications and advocacy and news and multimedia, with seven workstreams:
- (i) Corporate and internal communications
  - (ii) Innovation and partnerships
  - (iii) Campaigns and outreach
  - (iv) Field communications
  - (v) Media relations
  - (vi) Multimedia production
  - (vii) Web development and technical production

### **Our field hub: Channelling evidence into storytelling**

7. Visibility with a purpose that highlights IFAD's mission, work, evidence and stories requires being on the ground to support IFAD's aim and reach as indicated in section 3 on decentralization.
8. The field is where everything starts and ends, where IFAD's target populations live and where its results are generated. And as more IFAD staff in technical and



support areas are decentralized, communications needs to accompany them to ensure we're capturing the stories and leading from the ground up.

9. In line with that we are proposing a basic model which is the minimum to deliver a complete communications "value chain," creating the needed dialogues to inform our communications and public advocacy at the local, regional, national, and international levels – strengthening our global engagement.
10. As we move ahead, our model aims to increase the quality and regularity of our communications and advocacy in a multilingual and culturally reflective manner. While stationing communications staff in the field has some costs, at the same time it promises some savings from moving away from expensive and potentially ineffective outsourcing to an internal investment in staff competencies and capacity.

### **C. Measuring communications monitoring and evaluation for success**

11. Measuring and evaluating impact is our daily work in communications – our effectiveness depends on our ability to consistently monitor and incorporate adjustments in real time.
12. We are already establishing benchmarks for data across workstreams that we can use to measure our progress as we move forward. These include:
  - Robust social media analytics on growth and follower engagement
  - Media monitoring reports compiled of IFAD mentions in news articles
  - Event impact reports which compile communications statistics after key global events
  - Corporate website tracking including Google analytics data
  - Key messaging review and evaluation
13. Monitoring and evaluation is closely tied to both workstream outcomes in the key action areas and in staff performance goals tied to these outcomes.
14. On an annual basis, this strategic approach is fed into COM's divisional workplan and priorities, which are in turn aligned with ERG departmental goals, as well as IFAD operational goals and key performance indicators. Through these linkages, the communications approach is both reflective of corporate priorities and cascaded down to the individual level, with measurable outcomes at all levels.
15. Central to monitoring and evaluating is seeing how our results transcend the data we aggregate to the visibility and positioning IFAD enjoys. The ultimate test is the degree to which we become the go-to agency that effectively delivers long-term impact in the most remote and marginalized areas, standing side by side with rural people around the world.

#### **Re-emphasis on outcomes**

- (i) **People know.** IFAD is positioned as a leading voice on global issues in relation to rural development, providing concrete solutions for a better world.
- (ii) **People engage.** Our growing audiences are drawn to our content and actively engaging with our causes. They not only feel compassion for the people we serve, but feel connected to our core.
- (iii) **People act.** Our audiences feel possibility, urgency and the desire to make a difference. Policies shift, change happens.

# BE BOLD. BE HEARD.

Global Communications and  
External Advocacy

**The way forward  
to IFAD12 and  
beyond**



Investing in rural people

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Turn the page and let's get this  
show on the road.





**Putting rural lives  
at the heart of the  
global narrative**



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Communication: Visibility with a purpose.....	4
1. Building the foundation .....	7
2. Moving forward strategically with urgency .....	11
3. Going forward – Communications in action .....	14
4. Priority themes.....	17
5. Key action areas .....	19
6. Implementing the strategic approach .....	26
Conclusion .....	31
Appendix I: Communications during the Project Lifecycle.....	33





# Communication: Visibility with a purpose

## The way forward to IFAD12 and beyond

### PUTTING RURAL LIVES AT THE HEART OF THE GLOBAL NARRATIVE

IFAD is unique. It is the only specialized global development organization - a UN-IFI hybrid – exclusively dedicated to transforming agriculture, rural economies and food systems through a variety of funding mechanisms that ensure its investments reach millions of rural people at greatest risk of being left behind.

**What we know is that IFAD goes the extra mile.** It has a proven comparative advantage in terms of targeting the most vulnerable, as well as its long-term efficiency and effectiveness. IFAD also plays an essential role in advancing the 2030 Agenda, particularly SDGs 1 and 2.

Today, more than ever before, **IFAD's unique mandate and the development issues it addresses have become an important part of a growing global narrative.** While rural development and the challenges faced by small-scale producers were once issues only touched upon by a select group of development organizations and media outlets, in recent years there has been a major shift.

IFAD's focus on rural development as a prerequisite to global resilience increasingly resonates around the world. In 2020 IFAD was featured in the world's most prominent media, from the **The Guardian** to **Newsweek**, from **Les Echos** and **Le Monde** to the **BBC**, **Deutsche Welle** and the **China Daily**. **Forbes magazine** specifically called on the world's billionaires to invest in IFAD as one of the top three organizations that really do impact the future of our planet.

---

# Forbes magazine specifically called on the world's billionaires to invest in IFAD as one of the top three organizations that really do impact our planet's future.

---

## The time is now

The opportunity has never been better, but seizing the moment to increase IFAD's visibility and profile is a collective commitment and definite choice.

If we choose visibility, then we need to focus on its purpose and expected outcomes.

Today, the immediacy of digital technology allows everyone and anyone to chime in and be heard. Our challenge is to rise above the noise by presenting a strong, clear and resoundingly unified voice.

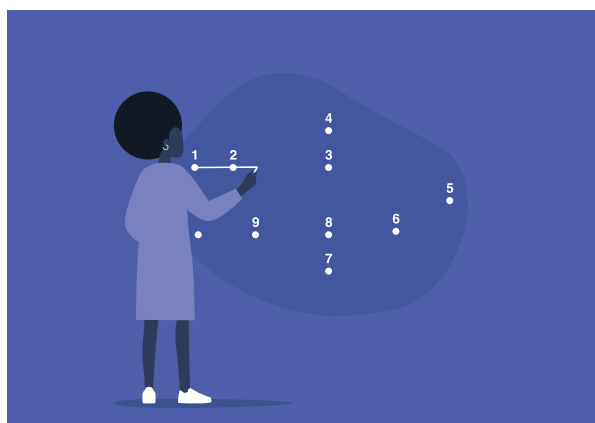
It does not matter how big or small you are – visibility is a necessity. What matters is how you stand out in a crowded field, how you get people to pay attention and to understand why you matter, to drive the narrative in your favour and, more importantly, to make your audiences feel they matter, and that what you say matters to them. And that they take actions in support of your cause.

Before we get started, let's go back to the basics.

**Communications is all about connecting the dots.** We analyse what's happening in the world around us. We think about the bigger picture and then we relate it back to our purpose, our mandate, our needs, while taking into consideration the needs and ambitions of others.

Within the context of IFAD, that means that we connect global realities and concerns to those of rural people and reflect that narrative back to influencers, leaders and the population at large.

To do this, we define the messages, develop campaigns and customize our approach to our various audiences and through our diverse channels to position IFAD in the best possible way for the best possible outcome.



**We leverage our partnerships to maximize our reach and echo our calls for action.**

To be successful, we need to have a multi-faceted approach, addressing the political, socio-economic, cultural and geographical variables while continuing to develop our multilingual approach, in order to ensure our messages and calls for action resonate where we need them to. And today we have a unique opportunity because our work, our expertise and our ambitions have made it to the top of global agendas. Our voice can and should resonate loud and clear, giving us the opportunity to establish IFAD as a thought leader.

Stateless, transnational challenges, like climate change, the global migration crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, are currently what occupies the attention of national governments, their citizens and the media – all of which can be linked back to IFAD.

With our particular expertise, our focus on scaling up rural development, and making sure no one is left behind, this is our opportunity to weigh in, make our voices heard and be part of the global dialogue to showcase our comparative advantage.

Finally, we need to ensure that we aren't just pushing out but also pulling in by listening, facilitating dialogue and monitoring and evaluating our work on a constant basis so that our stories from the field showcase IFAD's purpose, expertise and results. We need to show and not tell why IFAD is the "right choice." Because investing in IFAD is, after all, a choice, and communication is there to make it an obvious one.

Choosing the right partners to echo our calls to action, support innovation and maximize the number of people we reach are equally fundamental.

Decentralizing our efforts and making sure that we use our global footprint to make a difference also needs to be at the heart of our strategic approach going forward – it enhances IFAD's ability to be as the voice for the rural poor around the world.

**Leveraging the data and evidence** of IFAD's results generated through project teams, operational divisions and knowledge management ensures we have credible messages backed by solid evidence.

This, in turn, will enable us to strengthen our case that IFAD is key to global resilience and vital to sustainable development and achieving the 2030 Agenda.

The very same principles apply to a strategic approach to internal communications. Here too, communications need to connect people in a more visible and productive way, opening new spaces for dialogue, engagement and commitment to the future of our organization. In doing so we will be stronger together.



# 1. BUILDING THE FOUNDATION

This Global Communications and Public Advocacy approach aligns with IFAD's agenda for growth and describes how purposeful strategic communication will lead the way forward, ensuring IFAD's success during the IFAD12 years and beyond. It is an outcome of the IFAD11 commitment 3.5 (33) which calls for an update of IFAD's Communications Strategy and Action Plan.

Based on the vision presented here, the Communications Division (COM) proposes steps to ensure the institution is well known, endorsed and strongly supported by Member States, kindred NGOs, and the private and philanthropic sectors. Furthermore, it aims to **position IFAD as a thought leader and a driver of change** by engaging audiences (particularly youth) in why rural development matters for our global future.

A critical point raised in this strategic approach is that visibility with a purpose begins with a conscious shift from **thinking about communications as an on-demand service to a strategic partner that is essential to reaching the institution's highest goals**. This choice, aligning with COM's organization and

function, will positively impact IFAD's ability to be a leader in the development and financial sectors. This in turn will determine whether IFAD will be the first choice for engagement and investment by Member States, individuals, NGOs, foundations and the private sector.

## Building familiarity, trust and credibility

Close your eyes for a second and think of UNICEF; what is the first image that comes to mind? Now do the same with UNHCR, with WFP, with UNESCO even...if you are like most people, an image immediately comes up. A single defining picture that tells you more about their work than any words could. Those images combined with the fact that their names are so familiar generate a sense of belonging, importance, respect.

These institutions work hard every day to project their identity, value and appeal through strategic communications. They know that donors, lenders, governments and programme partners choose the multilaterals and financial institutions they know and trust to use their funds and other assets efficiently and effectively, during crises as well as in so-called normal times.

### Strategic communication builds trust and familiarity for an organization, enhancing its credibility.

This, of course, requires a critical mass of sustained effort and support to communicate effectively and to be seen.



---

**As an amplifier and catalyst, fostering desired actions by target audiences is always the aim of strategic communication.**

---



Corporate communication, which includes both external and internal communications strategies, is the overarching instrument in an organization's toolkit that delivers those messages to the right people, at the right times and in the right ways. These strategic communication functions, when implemented by experienced professionals, are what get the job done.

Global engagement through public advocacy to increase IFAD's visibility among broad audiences complements political advocacy undertaken by other IFAD divisions through direct engagement with decision makers. The two are distinct but mutually supporting.

Effective corporate communication units include internal communication, campaigns and advocacy, marketing, brand management, media relations, web and social media and publishing. They also include communications tools such as videos, infographics, press releases, podcasts, publications and speeches. But most importantly, effective corporate communications is strategic, considering communications in all aspects of the organization's work.

The aim is to use communications strategically as an amplifier and catalyst, fostering desired actions by engaging target audiences in our cause so that they feel impelled to embrace our purpose and work. It also means managing the organization's reputation as it builds its profile, and managing risks.

**Broadly our audiences are:**

**Member States and decision makers**

**Multilateral institutions**

**Private sector**

**Media**

**Civil society and broader general public (specifically youth and women)**

**Supporters and influencers**

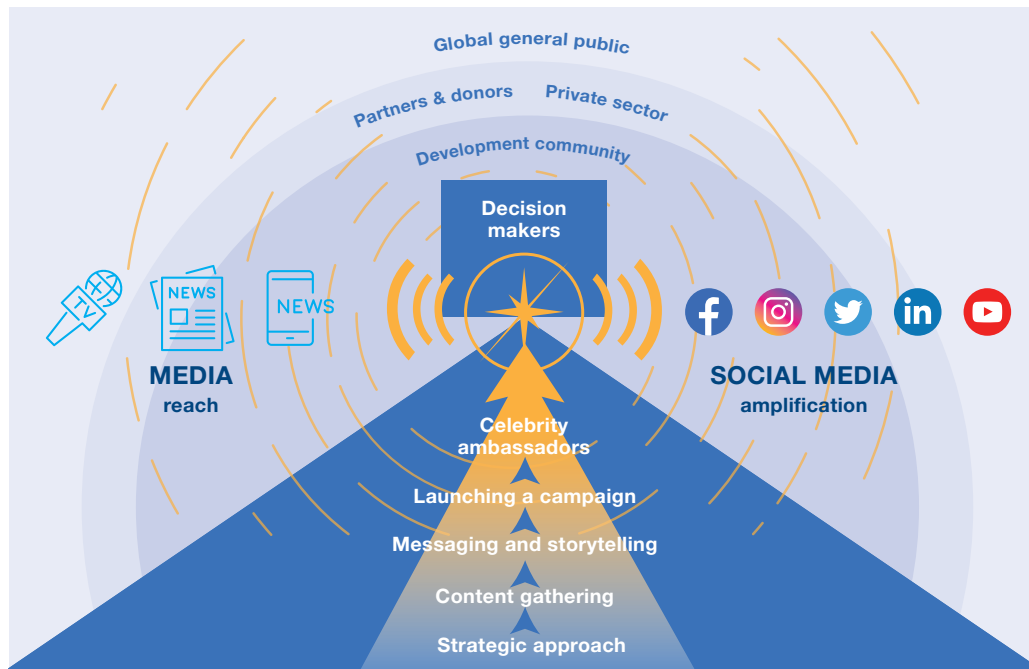
**IFAD staff**

**Each needs to be approached and targeted differently and can be powerful action takers for our purpose.**

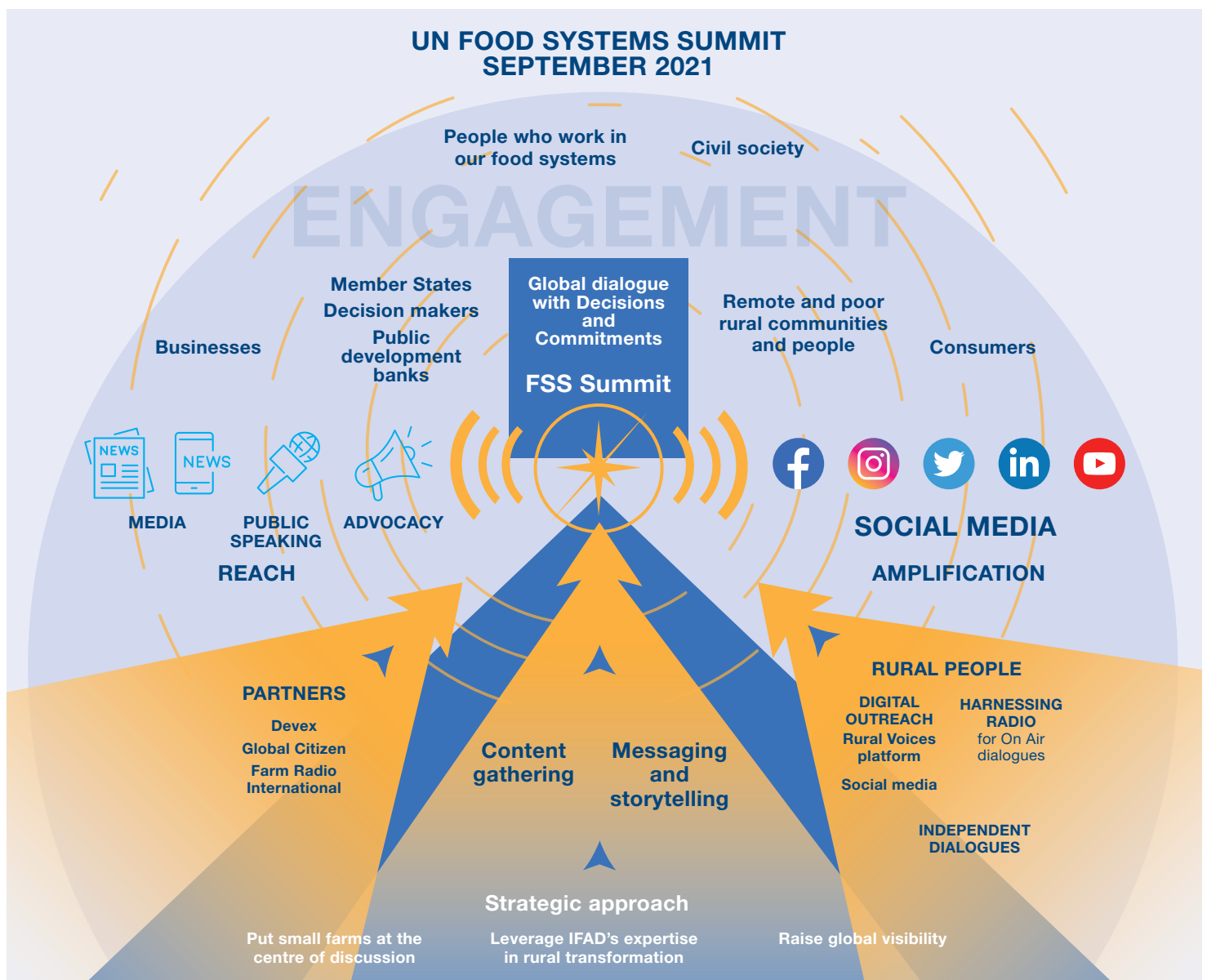
Starting in IFAD12, the institution will implement a plan to reach tens of millions more people, double the impact of its projects by 2030, and aim for systemic change through policy engagement with governments. The institution's plan includes a greater focus on mainstreaming themes to reach the most vulnerable rural people and countries with surgical precision and attention to crosscutting issues and enabling factors. Additionally, senior management is making needed changes throughout the institution which involve all employees, include a new financial architecture and much more resource mobilization.

To support these initiatives we will widen our scope and ensure IFAD's communications approach generates a broader based awareness with strategic partnerships, targeted external advocacy and marketing tactics as well as impactful employee communications that spark loyalty and staff engagement.

## High-profile events: Exemplifying communications in action



## Road to the Summit: Empowering rural people



## “Street recognition”

We have a perfect opportunity today, given the global context and growing awareness surrounding climate concerns, food systems and health, to take our call to action to fund rural development for a stronger future into the global grassroots narrative. The more our messages are echoed through and by the public at large, and youth in particular, our own ambitions will be that much easier to fulfill. Indeed our Member States and key stakeholders will feel that supporting IFAD is supporting the concerns of their own constituents. “Street recognition” will also be key in order to generate staff engagement, which will in turn add to IFAD’s visibility at an external level.

## Inspiring our workforce

IFAD staff are the key to its success – all things rest on their creativity, innovativeness, enthusiasm, loyalty and engagement. Impactful employee communication, therefore, plays a strategic role in establishing a climate of trust, building understanding, sharing knowledge, generating excitement and galvanizing IFAD’s workforce together toward a shared vision.

As IFAD continues the implementation of its ambitious reform agenda for growth, it will create a more comprehensive and robust employee communication function and approach that will include furthering institutional understanding of the critical role and purpose of internal communications, introducing tools and updated guidelines and strategies that support employee engagement in an increasingly decentralized environment, while working to more effectively bridge internal and external communications in order to build staff awareness of the role they play in supporting IFAD’s visibility and brand.

Just like other stakeholders, IFAD employees can be active advocates with the right internal communications messages. **Our goal should be that most staff identify** as brand advocates and naturally look to take action, from posting on social media to talking about IFAD’s mission with their family, friends and networks – beyond their day-to-day responsibilities – with passion and pride.

# 2. MOVING FORWARD STRATEGICALLY WITH URGENCY

## Advancing IFAD's positioning and brand

As stated recently by both the UN Secretary-General and IFAD's President: "We must address 21st century challenges – epic geopolitical tensions, the climate crisis (...) – with 21st century solutions."

IFAD offers solutions to 21st century problems. We need to show it with a focused communications approach.

In fact, we have escalated our efforts to create a narrative that shows the need to scale up rural development as a key pathway to address global concerns such as climate change, a healthier world, and the accomplishment of the 2030 Agenda. This has gotten increasing recognition in the media and with our key stakeholders.

By applying strategic approaches to media engagement, the number of articles referencing IFAD in national, regional and global media (newspapers, television, radio and online) reached record levels in 2020.

One of the reasons is that our communication continues to be focused on the people behind our projects and, beyond that, how rural communities matter to our audiences' own future and that of their families. This trend and increased visibility is an indication of both the success of our approach and a growing interest in issues concerning small-scale producers, food systems, agriculture and rural development – IFAD's work and mandate – more broadly around the world.

Needless to say, the communications work we do is informed by and in collaboration with departments across IFAD. To ride the wave of growing public interest we now need to ramp up our approach.

**Using our communication to generate awareness, empathy and support for all of our causes is key because communicating with a purpose means more than disseminating information – it's about engaging your audiences and building commitment to your cause.**

There are three main elements behind cause communications which we will use to direct our strategic approach.

## Lead the Narrative

Be the leading voice on rural development ensuring we link it to how it plays into solutions for a better world

# 1

### HOW?

Use authoritative information to spread knowledge

Show IFAD's vision, impact and effectiveness

Build credibility, trust and familiarity by utilizing IFAD's UN identity and its values

Speak out in a timely and principled manner using powerful messaging

### TACTICS:

**Generate news** – create and share innovative content through our multiple channels and through strategic media outreach

**Lead on data, science and solutions** – produce and generate authoritative reports, publications, expert interviews etc.

**Be a thought leader** – become a recognized and trusted voice by proactively taking positions, showing initiative and promoting new ideas

### RESULT:

**PEOPLE KNOW.**

IFAD is positioned as a leading voice on global issues in relation to rural development, providing concrete solutions for a better world.

## Connect with people, make it personal

Show why this matters. Forge an emotive connection between individuals and our shared global challenges.

# 2

### HOW?

Use impactful, clear and bold messages that resonate and stick

Build empathy through memorable, hopeful, people-centred stories

Use influencers to connect, inspire and emphasize shared values

Highlight progress and solidarity and demonstrate solutions

Reach target audiences on platforms they use

### TACTICS:

**Focus on storytelling** – create human-centred stories that illustrate a wider problem and how it can be overcome

**Optimize production** – develop distinct content for each platform and target audience

**Encourage engagement** – launch targeted global campaigns, strong outreach and initiate strategic partnerships to have a multiplier effect

### RESULT:

**PEOPLE ENGAGE.**

Our growing audiences are drawn to our content and actively engaging with our causes. They not only feel compassion for the people we serve, but feel connected to our core underlying raison d'être.

## Mobilize action

Inspire audiences to feel possibility and mobilize them to act

# 3

### HOW?

Motivate through stories of local solutions

Offer avenues for change to movements and civil society

Provide ideas for individual action

Build partnerships to extend impact

Make a case for financial support to IFAD

### TACTICS:

**Highlight solutions** – use examples of how our world's problems are being fixed

**Offer hope** – create reasons for optimism

**Call for action** – point to blueprints (i.e. SDGs, climate science, peace plans) and funding needs

### RESULT:

**PEOPLE ACT.**

Our audiences feel possibility, agency and the desire to make a difference. Policies shift, change happens.

The IFAD 2021-2024 operating priorities and plans will comprise the foundation for the actual messages, media activities, products and target audiences to be developed in line with this strategic vision.

The support of IFAD Member States will be essential as we move forward with this vision to:

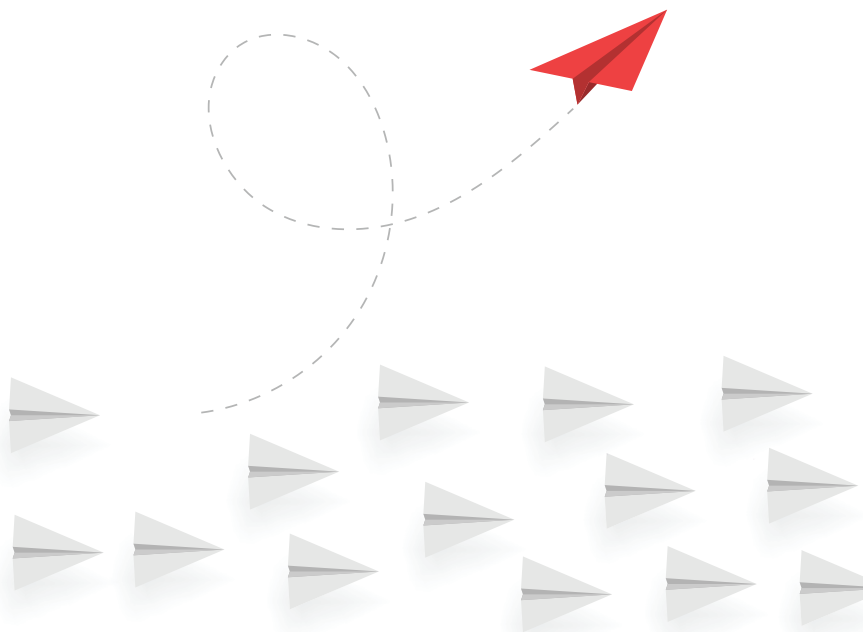
**Take guided steps** toward positioning IFAD as a thought leader, based on the principles of cause communications as indicated above.

**Make communications a strategic priority** as it redefines itself and boldly moves forward with its decentralization ambitions.

**Significantly expand our external advocacy mandate and innovative marketing approaches** to further collaborations and partnerships across all sectors, which is fundamental to growing our global engagement.

The underlying premise is that IFAD's Members will want to see IFAD front and centre in the agricultural development and financial sectors, known as a thought leader for progressive policy and practice, and selected as a first choice for engagement and investment by countries, development institutions, foundations and the private sector. This will not only increase IFAD's visibility but also contribute to our ultimate goal of putting rural lives at the heart of the global narrative.

**Investing in communications and global engagement moves us forward in IFAD12 and beyond,** understanding that visibility is an investment that pays off in dividends which allow us to do our work with exponential impact.



# 3. GOING FORWARD – COMMUNICATIONS IN ACTION

## Decentralization

The implementation of IFAD’s decentralization 2.0 plan will see the proportion of IFAD staff in the field rise to 45 per cent by 2023.

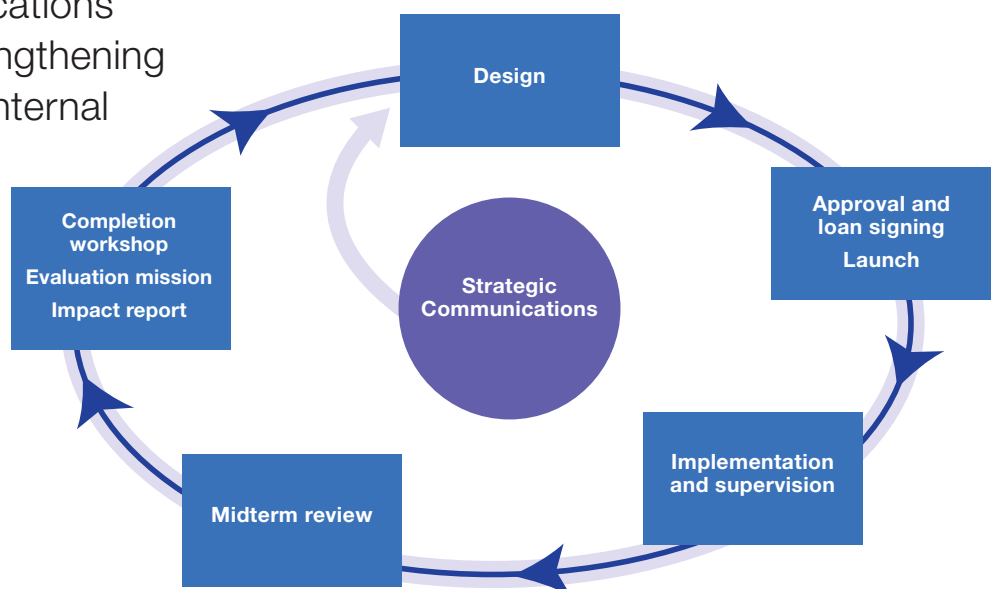
A main focus will be to capitalize on decentralization to get closer both to our key stakeholders on the ground, including the people who benefit from our work directly; amplifying their voices, telling their stories, and drawing them into a dialogue with policy makers, leaders, as well as the global public. This in turn will help establish IFAD in the global narrative and directly show why our presence on the ground matters while furthering the impact of our operations.

The human element and people’s stories are an important lever to start dialogues with target audiences and partners, and are at the heart of our strategic communication approach as we accompany decentralization and implementation of IFAD12. Evidence and results from projects are also key to demonstrating the contribution that IFAD’s work makes to rural development and global goals as a whole.

Strategic communications helps build strong partnerships locally and globally, project IFAD’s brand and comparative advantage, and build the capacity of staff in the field to be effective communicators on behalf of IFAD.

We work in line with IFAD’s rigorous Results Management Framework, and technical and financial experts across divisions who gather evidence of the results of IFAD’s investments, lessons learned and knowledge generated

Involving communications from the start: Strengthening collaboration with internal partners



See also Appendix I: Communications during the Project Lifecycle



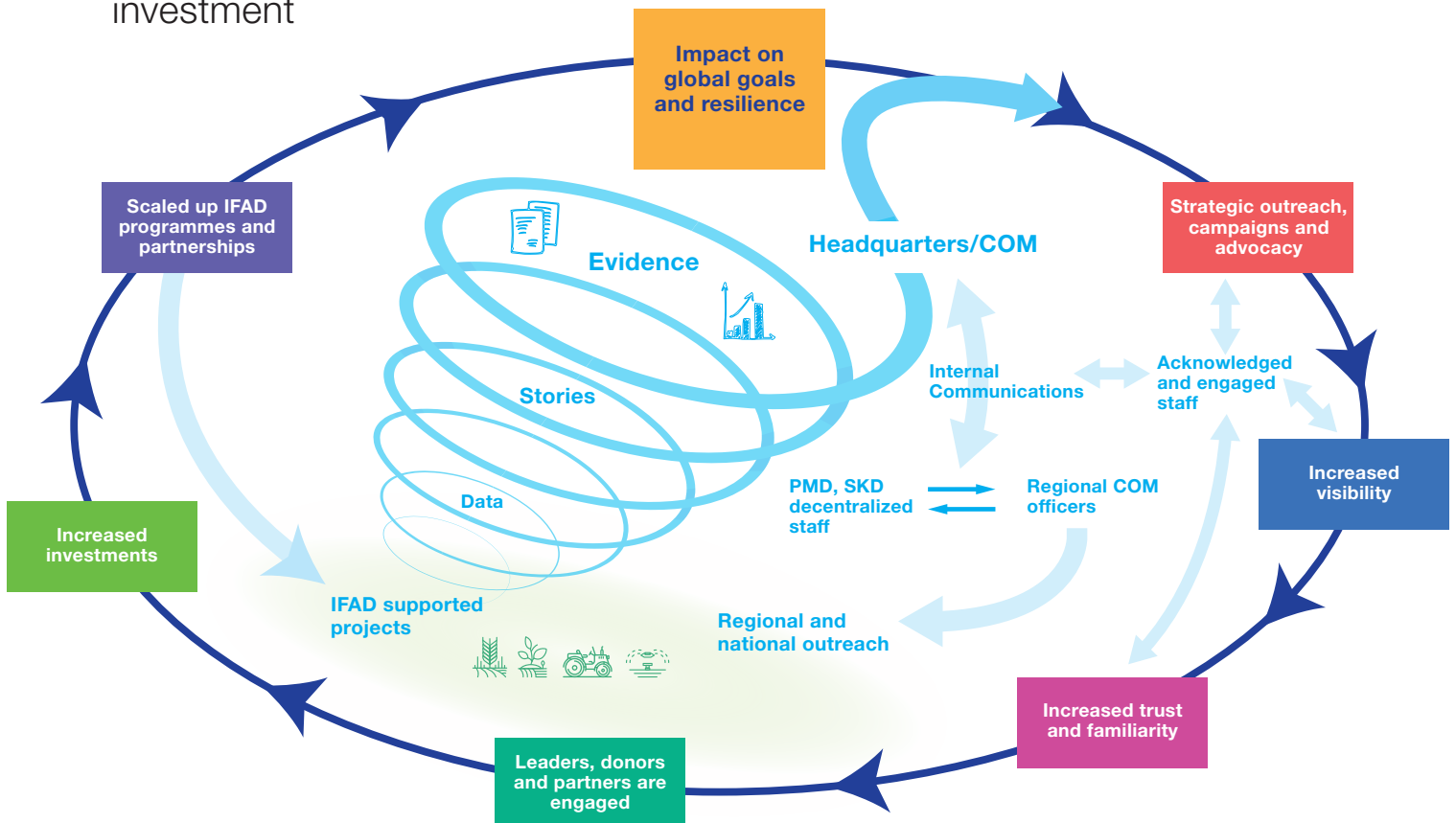
from the field. As we expand and deepen our ties, it is crucial that strategic communications and public advocacy work even more closely with these staff – and at the onset – to position IFAD strategically and advise accordingly. This further strengthens the informed and compelling narratives we need to deliver strongly on our comparative advantage.

The Communications Division’s Business Process Review in fact recognizes this cycle where decentralized communications experts located in regional and country offices work closely with IFAD operations and technical staff engaged in implementation, M&E and knowledge management, to transform evidence, data and stories into

impactful communications for visibility. This cyclical process is critical to decentralization moving forward.

This content stream is also channeled to headquarters and throughout the organization to inform global communications strategies and outreach. At the same time, the overall strategic corporate goals and links to global issues are communicated outward to decentralized offices through internal communications to inform and contextualize communications on the ground. This ensures that IFAD presents a consistent brand, and underscores for our audiences that IFAD’s field-level achievements also further international efforts toward global goals.

## Strategic communications for increased visibility and investment





Internal communications will support the activation of a global, interconnected team as part of the Decentralization 2.0 process. This means reinventing the ways in which we interact at the internal level, from an HQ-centred to a more horizontal, decentralized communication.

Field-based communication staff can move quickly to gather intelligence from the field to share with staff and management at headquarters, while also building relationships in countries with project staff and partner organizations. The headquarters team in turn adapts, amplifies and relays these messages and evidence to global audiences and decision makers.

It is critical that decentralization be about the people we serve- stories and content have to be adaptable to different platforms, audiences, and markets.

When fully elaborated, the communications network can most effectively exploit the opportunities to harvest evidence and

stories showing the value of IFAD's work and amplify it worldwide. Decentralization is a transformative opportunity that goes hand in hand with communications visibility with a purpose.

This is a multi-pronged and coordinated effort through various channels to reach key stakeholders and the public. IFAD's approach to each of these pathways will be deepened and expanded, as described below, to drive visibility around priority themes in global conversations.

# 4. PRIORITY THEMES

If we believe that rural people must be at the heart of global development, we need to connect the urgent need to address their issues to global debates.

If we have learned one thing from the pandemic, it is that issues of **vulnerability and resilience** – which have always been at the core of IFAD’s work with rural people – are now globally seen as urgent issues.

It is important to remember that programmatic priorities are also things that people care about – climate change, poverty, food and nutrition, and women’s empowerment, for example, all have taken a larger share of public attention in a world racked by COVID-19, where the marginalized have suffered the most. If we define vulnerability as the challenge these issues present, then we can frame the solution around two overarching themes:

**Resilience** can be an overarching priority theme into which some of these issues are integrated. This has many benefits: It fits with the way IFAD works holistically to transform rural areas, coordinating action to address multiple challenges rural people face; and resilience is already a headline theme of the IFAD12 replenishment period.

**Inclusion** can be an umbrella theme that encompasses women’s empowerment, the need for equity in access to resources and finance, and overcoming marginalization for groups such as youth, indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities. It reflects the post-COVID consensus that the gap between the haves and have-nots, between producers and consumers, needs to be closed.

The IFAD 2021-2024 operating priorities and plans will be a foundation for specific messages, media, activities, campaigns, products, events and target audiences. In particular, global communications will look at strategies, reinforced with new critical functions that cast a stronger and wider net.



## Turning Themes Into Messages

Underlying our messages will be these key principles:

**Remind people that agriculture and rural development are essential to achieving SDGs 1 and 2** and contribute to reduced levels of tension and armed conflict locally and ultimately globally.

**Spotlight resilience and sustainability** during the COVID-19 pandemic and other shocks, and highlighting sustainable agriculture and climate adaptation and mitigation.

**Demonstrate IFAD's transformative impact** on small-scale producers and entrepreneurs and their communities, not just through finance but behaviour change and social empowerment, including gender equality, and opportunities for youth and persons with disabilities.

**Tell human stories that offer hope, that tell the impact of IFAD support on people's lives, and letting** project participants speak for themselves, and positioning staff as experts who can talk authoritatively about IFAD's impact.

**Simplify development themes into highly salient and less complex messaging.** Even when IFAD programmes and positions are complex, it is our responsibility to condense and communicate them in ways that are easy for audiences to digest. Stakeholders must easily comprehend the message in order to figure out how to take action.

**When we reach the right audiences with the right tools, using innovative approaches and tactics,** we achieve a greater impact in terms of visibility, connecting our themes to stories of rural people, and inspiring our audiences to act.



# 5. KEY ACTION AREAS

## Embracing a digital future

The world has learned a lot from the coronavirus pandemic, not the least of which has been how to exist, thrive and prosper in an increasingly digital environment.

IFAD too, is fully embracing its digital future and placing digital communications at the centre of its visibility and advocacy strategy – from virtual field trips, interactive conference platforms, podcasts and e-newsletters, to high-engagement enhancements to IFAD’s corporate website and social media channels.

As part of our approach, we will undertake an in-depth redesign and restructuring of ifad.org with the aim of repositioning the corporate website as a central hub with visually impactful design, enhanced storytelling, improved multilingual functionalities and stronger engagement through the use of interactive digital products.



In support of IFAD’s decentralization agenda, we will develop a sustainable digital framework that outlines roles, responsibilities and accountability for IFAD’s websites, social media channels and other digital based products, laying the foundation for IFAD’s digital presence at the regional and country level while helping to advance our goal to reach more people by meeting them where they are, in the languages they speak and with localized content. Where possible, we will engage with strategic communications partners to achieve these visibility aims, leveraging their valuable expertise to further our digital ambitions.

We will continue to explore new ways of growing corporate social media channels and deepening engagement with key audiences, using social media monitoring and listening tools to inform and guide tactics with robust data.

Increased use of social media graphic design and video content will be fundamental to effectively implement this approach and enable IFAD to lead the narrative, connect with audiences and mobilize action.

## Expanding our reach

### Media will play a critical role in building IFAD visibility, brand familiarity and thought leadership.

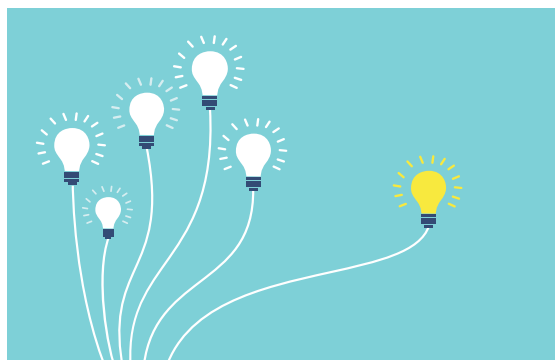
With strategic targeting of media outlets, active engagement at high-level global events, clear and relevant messaging linked to newsworthy developments and global issues, in addition to celebrity and influencer support, IFAD can become a leading voice on rural development through a growing media footprint.

During the IFAD12 period, we will continue to identify and target media outlets and journalists who can help influence key decision makers and reach particular audiences. This will include support from specialized media consultants in key countries who will monitor media narratives and identify opportunities for proactively pitching IFAD's storyline and expertise.

Leveraging our enhanced field presence and closer relationships with operational and project staff, we will offer media trips specifically tailored to witnessing IFAD's work and key thematics on the ground; invite Member State ambassadors and other officials posted in-country to participate in field visits to IFAD-supported projects; work with regional directors and country directors to increase their profiles and communication effectiveness, including with the media; while expanding the

reach of regional social media channels to boost engagement in borrowing countries and among donors.

In order to generate news, the development of fresh data and original research will be critical in our efforts to position IFAD as an authoritative, relevant voice that is willing to take a strong position on key issues. Just as connecting journalists to eloquent and inspiring project participants who can provide them with first-hand insights will personalize the development challenges and solutions and make people care about the issues. Increased interactions with staff in IFAD-supported projects will include story gathering and training/ capacity building. We want to ensure content is developed that will be adaptable for both local and international media markets. In short, decentralized media outreach should be part of an overarching global media strategy.





## **Energizing IFAD's brand: Campaigns and outreach**

Continuous innovation is key to expanding and even maintaining IFAD's brand and engagement with its stakeholders.

In addition to advocacy, campaigns are strong communications tools for brand awareness and messaging. In the past IFAD has created brand campaigns (e.g. The Field Report) and will continue to build on its brand work and thematic campaigns around gender, youth and climate (#RecipesforChange) to increase IFAD's brand recognition with the public.

IFAD will increase its commitment to campaigns, around key events like the Food Systems Summit and COP meetings, where COVID-19 has fast-forwarded transition to digital and virtual discussion spaces and just to keep up, and be able to offer compelling, highly professional and impactful content and experiences to audiences implies investments in technology, human resources, skills and capacity. To get its story out in this environment, IFAD will create content that is more visual, more design-savvy, incorporating more video and compelling imagery, for example.

On the technical side, data visualization will evolve so that IFAD presents its results and key numbers in easily graspable and telling ways. Publications will become more engaging and digitally focused, with more interactive and visual approaches to content across the board—visual storytelling with a people focus that builds a strong connection with audiences to impel them to care and act. With almost half of the staff in the field, the decentralized environment will also mean that IFAD will need to train and sensitize staff on promoting and

protecting IFAD's brand. New platforms and tools will be created to build staff awareness and engagement both at HQ and field levels: a restructured intranet, an internal social media sharing platform, a newsletter to get IFAD even closer to all of its staff. Internal communications will focus on creating a new generation of strong IFAD champions.

## **Growing our advocacy base**

We have seen firsthand the impact that successful celebrity engagement and advocacy efforts can have – by engaging influencers like Idris and Sabrina Elba, Mr. Eazi, and Sherrie Silver. Thanks to them, we have gained public awareness at unprecedented levels and we will continue growing that portfolio. Additionally, going forward, IFAD will grow our network of supporters beyond celebrity ambassadors as we look to engage a broader base of known influencers. We will also look to engage energized youth and citizen advocates as champions for change.

Growing our advocacy base involves more than just reaching target audiences with tailored messages – we also want them to feel invested in the solution, empowered to make change, and positively reinforced when they take action.

15. Internally, we will also be looking to strengthen our advocacy base by creating new communications toolkits to enable Board members, and our partners, and ourselves as staff to join in championing IFAD. Recognizing that advocates have needs help us better market to them, making engaging with IFAD a meaningful and rewarding experience. This outcome will help us achieve IFAD's goal of being more visible with a brand that our community connects to. Ultimately, we want people to know who IFAD is, and in our ambition in being more public-facing will help us pivot to the public as we appeal for broader resources and support in the future.

## Forging new partnerships

Partnerships with like-minded leaders, including strategic communications partnerships, will enable IFAD to leverage platforms and markets offering an exponential increase in reach.

Our approach should be inclusive of organizations offering a range of resources and expertise, from civil society groups to nongovernmental organizations, from private sector companies to foundations. We will look at both traditional partners as well as non-traditional communications for revolutionary reach and impact.



For example, Global Citizen can support on key campaign and advocacy efforts, using their unique ability to leverage relationships with key leaders, and incorporate IFAD into their events, such as their Global Citizen Festival, which attract audiences in the millions. They can also help to engage the private sector to work with IFAD. As a connector, Global Citizen can help us establish relationships with leading communications companies who are like-minded and able to offer resources including but not limited to cause marketing campaigns, grants, and in-kind donations.

The SDG2 Advocacy Hub could also be a supportive partner. COM will continue to develop new partnerships with media and technology companies (e.g. Thomson Reuters Foundation, France24, TikTok, Instagram).

Essential to our approach is close coordination with the GPR private sector engagement team on current and new campaign partnerships, including Food Tank, Alliance to End Hunger, the UN Foundation, and others, that include both cause funding with citizens and brand visibility opportunities for IFAD; some examples being explored include Aldo Group with the UN Goodwill Ambassadors and others.





This means stressing both up-to-date data and evidence and storytelling approaches that show, rather than describe, the impact of IFAD's work, engaging audiences on both intellectual and emotional levels.

Training, especially of field staff in a decentralized context, is essential to be able to cultivate engagement with key audiences, going beyond intermittent, event-based or inward-looking communications. As IFAD sees increased visibility and "traffic" in global discussions of sustainable development and furthers its leadership role in regards to rural areas, key staff such as country directors will need to both engage more consistently and be prepared to speak authoritatively and respond to media inquiries and reputational issues.

As IFAD expands its financial model and the products it offers, as well as deepening its involvement with the private sector, staff in financial and other areas will need to increase their communications and their skills. This is already happening, for example in communications support for presentations related to the ongoing cultivation of potential investors.

Both real-world and digital platforms will be important in a post-COVID world to enhance IFAD's thought leadership. From participating in virtual panels to interacting on up-and-coming platforms, IFAD leadership should be poised to capitalize on what is trending and where we need to go to get our messages heard and amplified.

## Internal communication, a game changer

Impactful internal communications approaches will not only be key to the successful implementation of IFAD's ambitious reform agenda but also play a critical role in supporting IFAD's external visibility and engagement.

Fully integrated into our Strategic Communications Approach, internal communications will be:

**Strategic**, by restructuring the tools, platforms and channels to convey internal messages in an innovative, accessible and transparent way. We will work on making the vision behind the reforms clear and simple to understand for all IFAD personnel. One of the key milestones will focus on the intranet redesign to make it more efficient and strategic.



**Integrated and outward-looking**, by strengthening the collaboration with other COM units. Internal communications can boost external visibility through staff engagement but also inspire campaigns and highlight IFAD's mission by acknowledging our personnel's efforts and achievements. A new internal social media sharing platform will be launched to enable to become an IFAD champion easily.

**Dynamic**, by adapting to IFAD's evolving reality, especially decentralization 2.0. New ways of communicating will emerge, as we support the activation of IFAD's decentralized global team.

**Two-way**, by strengthening our constant dialogue with other departments and divisions, as well as IFAD's staff and the Staff Association. We will complement the existing feedback opportunities where gaps are identified to ensure that everyone is heard for a truly collaborative approach.

## Crisis communications and reputational risk management

The Communications Division must factor in IFAD's reputation and assessing risk – whether for a position we take on an emerging humanitarian crisis or a potential partnership.

Managing risk is about how we do our work. As IFAD becomes a more prominent brand we will have to consider this more and more (with visibility comes scrutiny), and thus the need to ensure IFAD's mission, role and values are correctly depicted.

Monitoring and evaluation is critical to a results-based approach to communications that is aligned with IFAD's solutions-oriented mandate. This means we are doing our due diligence – we are clearly identifying standards, key performance indicators, benchmarks for success, reassessing our approaches and tactics, and collecting data that will inform our progress.

# 6. IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGIC APPROACH

We know we want visibility with a purpose – but how does an ambitious strategic approach get implemented?

## Our vision in motion

This Strategic Communications Approach has outlined how we plan to communicate IFAD's mission, brand and results in compelling ways.

This also requires a clear plan for implementing the proposed actions, including how COM will reorient itself to work with partners across the house to achieve IFAD's communications goals.

## OVERARCHING OBJECTIVES

- Complement and coordinate with the broader organizational goals.
- Maximize return on investment of time and resources.
- Collaborate both within communications and across divisions to achieve outcomes.
- Cultivate strong and lasting relationships and build a strong organizational reputation.
- Aligning with IFAD's reform agenda, identify needs for increased impact.

## TARGET AUDIENCES

- Member States
- IFAD staff
- General public
- UN agencies and NGO leaders
- Primary partners: private sector and foundations
- Journalists and influencers

## TACTICS

### Web and digital:

- In-depth redesign and restructuring of ifad.org with the aim of repositioning the corporate website as a digital hub with impactful design, storytelling and improved multilingual functionality.
- Develop a digital framework that outlines standards for IFAD's websites, social media channels and other digital based products, laying a foundation for IFAD's digital presence at the regional and country level.
- Ramp up social media activities and use social listening tools to guide and inform tactics, while deepening audience engagement through campaigns and supportive partnerships.
- Increase use of high-engagement social media graphic design and video content, enabling IFAD to lead the narrative, connect with audiences and mobilize action.

### **Media relations:**

- Decentralize media relations efforts so that staff, supported by a network of media and story-gathering consultants, are more familiar with IFAD's work on the ground and can generate strong human-interest stories that demonstrate the impact of IFAD's investments, and build stronger relationships with local journalists and other partners who can amplify IFAD's messages.
- Create news by developing fresh data, original research, and media-focused events.
- Establish IFAD spokespeople as reliable, available experts and strong thought leaders that media can call on for commentary on relevant topics and events. Through messaging training, IFAD experts will be able to effectively communicate their strong and authoritative positions.
- Organize regular press trips with influential target media (international, regional and local) which connect IFAD's work on the ground to the news agenda, to give journalists direct access to project participants and IFAD experts, and to familiarize them with IFAD's work on the ground.
- Monitor and evaluate the quality and quantity of media coverage and share results with relevant stakeholders.

### **Branding and content:**

- Clearly define what imagery we want instantly associated with IFAD's brand, invest in gathering content, and weave these efforts into all communications materials.
- Through decentralization, cultivate content for storytelling, including visual storytelling, while guiding efforts to streamline this process and raise awareness of the communications toolkit, branding and messaging guidelines.

- In collaboration with other divisions, develop additional multilingual materials to explain IFAD's mission and mandate to our various target audiences.
- Capitalize on associating IFAD's brand with public educational opportunities to exponentially increase our visibility, including through development partnerships and youth programmes.

### **Innovation and partnerships:**

- Create a strategic innovation and communications partnerships workstream to build and steward relationships that help achieve visibility and awareness of IFAD's mission.
- Develop communications components to current partnerships in tandem with building new strategic communications partnerships that capitalize on partners' expertise and resources.
- Leverage networks, including Global Citizen, film festivals, and the UN Food Systems Summit to connect to prospects familiar and friendly to IFAD, such as Aldo Group and Verizon.
- Utilize staff networks to connect to influencers who can make the right introductions at the right levels to prospects, such as CanopyLAB, Disney, and others.
- Create partnership best practices in communications standards to guide messaging to be consistent with key IFAD campaign communication messaging.

### **Staff engagement:**

- Thought leadership: Offer communications and media trainings, especially for field staff to be able to speak with authority on IFAD positions.

- Research and identify opportunities to engage senior IFAD leadership in meaningful and impactful thought leadership opportunities, including virtual panels and conferences.
- Strengthen and broaden the ongoing consultation process with IFAD's different departments, divisions, units and teams – both at HQ and on the field – as well as IFAD personnel/Staff Association, to ensure cross-cutting collaboration is designed in a participative way and implemented collaboratively.
- Restructure and create a number of crucial tools for strategic and two-way communication: a redesign of the intranet to be more strategic and functional and launching new tools to facilitate staff information and engagement, including IFADnow, social media sharing platform.
- Support IFAD's main reform processes, including decentralization 2.0, in an innovative way; through communications trainings with multimedia contents designed to make change understandable and accessible to all and decentralized event and field-to-field dialogues where HQ gets a chance to reposition itself as an equal par.
- Collaborate to strengthen the integration of internal and external communication: we will include a strong staff engagement component in the promotion of all future campaigns, and will give visibility to IFAD's personnel at the external level by including staff human stories in our external content.

Note: Although an internal communications approach and action plan has been created in support of decentralization 2.0, a more comprehensive internal communications strategy will be developed in the coming months in close collaboration and consultation with internal divisions, working groups, the KM team and Staff Association.

### **Crisis communications and reputational risk management:**

- Review and update crisis communications and risk management procedures and guidelines to ensure continued protection of IFAD's public image.
- Monitor, assess and make recommendations to the President and Senior Management for situations involving a high reputational risk for IFAD, such as failures to meet the Fund's ethical or technical standards, political crisis, natural disasters or other factors which may impact the way the Fund operates.
- Establish mechanisms within the Communications Division for handling media inquiries in consultation with concerned IFAD divisions.
- Input to staff trainings and internal campaigns to ensure an understanding of individual responsibility to safeguard IFAD's reputation.

All of these workstreams as outlined have one overarching streamlined approach to prioritize decision-making:

- **Issues:** we evaluate the issues and look for opportunities
- **Impact:** we assess and forecast their impacts
- **Action:** we inform recommended actions with this critical thinking

→ **The result is increased visibility**

## **What it looks like:**

### **A scalable model for implementation**

Ultimately, we know that visibility with a purpose needs to be adaptable, able to mirror the organization's priorities in response to a shifting global landscape. We also know that while increasing our global communications impact requires a bigger footprint, in a constrained environment it also means using available resources adaptively and efficiently.

So to summarize, and as stated above, our strategy highlights three concrete steps:

1. Reorganizing the division in response to IFAD's agenda for growth and need for increased visibility in donor and operational countries.
2. Delivering on this expanded global approach will require additional resources, so we are proposing a scalable model that can be phased in over time.
3. Aligning our strategic approach with the recommendations of the BPR and the McKinsey study and through the Dynamic Workforce Planning Exercise.

IFAD's Communications Division will be reorganized into a more efficient and targeted configuration for delivering on this approach and action plan and changing our name to reflect this transformation. This will be a model with two primary teams: corporate communications and advocacy and news and multimedia, with seven workstreams:

1. Corporate and internal communications
2. Innovation and partnerships
3. Campaigns and outreach
4. Field communications
5. Media relations
6. Multimedia production
7. Web development and technical production

### **Our field hub: Channelling evidence into storytelling**

Visibility with a purpose that highlights IFAD's mission, work, evidence and stories requires being on the ground to support IFAD's aim and reach as indicated in section 3 on decentralization.

The field is where everything starts and ends, where IFAD's target populations live and where its results are generated. And as more IFAD staff in technical and support areas are decentralized, communications needs to accompany them to ensure we're capturing the stories and leading from the ground up.

In line with that we are proposing a basic model which is the minimum to deliver a complete communications "value chain," creating the needed dialogues to inform our communications and public advocacy at the local, regional, national, and international levels - strengthening our global engagement.

As we move ahead, our model aims to increase the quality and regularity of our communications and advocacy in a multilingual and culturally reflective manner. While stationing communications staff in the field has some costs, at the same time it promises some savings from moving away from expensive and potentially ineffective outsourcing to an internal investment in staff competencies and capacity.



## Measuring communications monitoring and evaluation for success

Measuring and evaluating impact is our daily work in communications – our effectiveness depends on our ability to consistently monitor and incorporate adjustments in real-time. We are already establishing benchmarks for data across workstreams that we can use to measure our progress as we move forward. These include:

- Robust social media analytics on growth and follower engagement
- Media monitoring reports compiled of IFAD mentions in news articles
- Event impact reports which compile communications statistics after key global events
- Corporate website tracking including Google analytics data
- Key messaging review and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation is closely tied to both workstream outcomes in the key action areas and in staff performance goals tied to these outcomes.

On an annual basis, this strategic approach is fed into COM's divisional workplan and priorities, which are in turn aligned with ERG departmental goals, as well as IFAD operational goals and key performance indicators. Through these linkages, the communications approach is both reflective of corporate priorities and cascaded down to the individual level, with measurable outcomes at all levels.

Central to monitoring and evaluating is seeing how our results transcend the data we aggregate to the visibility and positioning IFAD enjoys. The ultimate test is the degree to which we become the go-to agency that effectively delivers long-term impact in the most remote and marginalized areas, standing side by side with rural people around the world.

## Re-emphasis on outcomes

### PEOPLE KNOW.

IFAD is positioned as a leading voice on global issues in relation to rural development, providing concrete solutions for a better world.

### PEOPLE ENGAGE.

Our growing audiences are drawn to our content and actively engaging with our causes. They not only feel compassion for the people we serve, but feel connected to our core.

### PEOPLE ACT.

Our audiences feel possibility, urgency and the desire to make a difference. Policies shift, change happens.

# CONCLUSION

Due to its record of accomplishment spanning decades, IFAD has built strong trust and familiarity among governments, partners and rural communities.

IFAD's mandate is more relevant than ever, and it plays a key part in achieving the 2030 Agenda.

As it seeks to grow and double its impact by 2030, IFAD needs to expand and deepen its communications approaches to reach the next level. While the centrality of rural development to eliminating poverty and hunger and building global resilience is increasingly recognized, IFAD cannot assume that its unique mandate and the good work that it does in this area will be as well.

In fact, to be part of the growing global narrative around rural development, food systems, resilience and adaptation to climate change, IFAD must make a conscious shift from thinking about communications as an on-demand service or episodic activity to envisioning it as an integral, continuous and strategic function that is part of achieving the Fund's highest goals.

**This is visibility with a purpose, a collective commitment and definite choice.** It is a prerequisite to the three key aspects of cause communications:

Leading the narrative, connecting with people and galvanizing them to action.

The underlying premise is that IFAD's Members will want to see IFAD front and centre in the agricultural development and financial sectors, known as a thought leader for progressive policy and practice, and selected as a first choice for engagement and investment by countries, development institutions, foundations and the private sector. This will not only increase IFAD's visibility but also contribute to our ultimate goal of putting rural lives at the heart of the global narrative.

Through Member State consultations, independent evaluations, and consulting firm studies, it has become evident that communications is central to answering the question on how to deliver this vision. We are responding to IFAD's needs by reorganizing in a more strategic way and we have laid out an action plan for how to get there. There is an investment of time and resources required to meet IFAD and Member States' ambition for global visibility and engagement – but when we become more visible we will better serve the people we support and we can mobilize resources to further our critical mission.

Our global communications and engagement strategic approach outlines the key directions that we will take as IFAD scales-up its operations, decentralizes to get closer to the people it serves, and develops its financial model and innovative solutions accordingly.

**The visibility we will bring is key to succeeding in achieving these ambitious goals.** Our footprint and structure must continue evolving and expanding, and to this end, we will be changing the division's name to "Global Communications and Public Advocacy" to reflect our growing mandate.



**The support of IFAD Member States will be essential as we move forward with this vision to:**

**Make communications a strategic priority** and partner across IFAD, as it redefines itself and boldly moves forward with its decentralization ambitions

**Significantly expand our external advocacy mandate and innovative marketing approaches** to further collaborations and partnerships across all sectors, which is fundamental to growing our global engagement

**Take guided steps** toward positioning IFAD as a thought leader, based on the principles of cause communications as indicated above.

**Monitor and evaluate** our outreach and initiatives to ensure we are delivering results and impact that are in line with expectations.

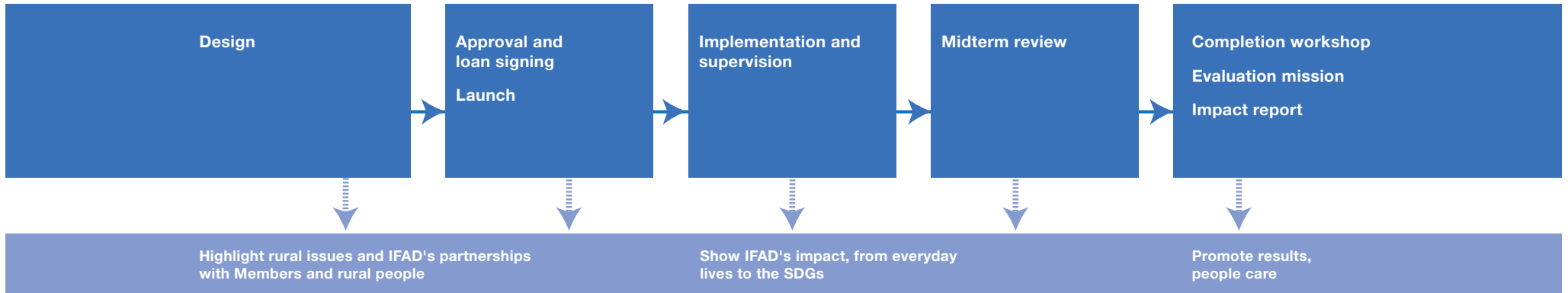
This communication and global engagement strategic approach will accompany IFAD's overall ambition to be closer to the peoples of the world and create a new dynamic **where the rural people we serve are at the heart of the sustainable solutions that IFAD delivers.**



#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:**

This strategic approach draws from multiple sources including interviews and consultations with comparator organizations (GFATM, UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP), internal consultations (regional directors, hub/country directors, COM officers and members of the IFAD Staff Association), in addition to other external consultations with private sector partners (Olam and Mars), NGO partners (Oxfam) and others.

# APPENDIX I: COMMUNICATIONS DURING THE PROJECT LIFECYCLE



## PARTNERS AND MULTIPLIERS



Government leaders

Project team (PMU)

IFAD operational and technical staff

Knowledge management team

Media, influencers

Partner organizations, cofinancers

Private sector, civil society

Rural people, project participants

IFAD advocates and champions

IFAD staff worldwide

External audiences

## ACTIONS



Work directly with the PMU's to kick off at start of project with a communications and branding toolkit, templates and check list.



Work with country teams, KM staff and project staff to transform knowledge into effective communications



Collect stories from the field for dissemination through all platforms and formats, including video and visual, social media, etc

Coordinate with UN, partner, and donor country communications teams

## Regional and national outreach



Generate media interest and reporting



Connect with rural people themselves to help them be heard



Mount specific tailor-made communications events such as field visits (virtual or physical)

Leverage senior management missions and global meetings