

# **COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA STRATEGY**

**AFRICA CENTER OF EXCELLENCE FOR NEGLECTED  
TROPICAL DISEASES AND FORENSIC BIOTECHNOLOGY,  
AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA.**

**2020-2021**

BY

**MURJANATU MOHAMMED ABBA**  
Communications Officer, ACENTDFB

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of the communication and media strategy is to ensure that the Africa Center of Excellence- Center for Neglected Tropical Diseases and Forensic Biotechnology (ACE-CNTDFB), Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, share valuable information about the center such as their research activities and its impact to the public.

The document will guide the key aspects of communication and media and set out the 2020-2021 strategy for internal and external relations. Internally, we wish to engage with and inform our members: management, researchers, students, and alumni. Externally, we want to engage with and inform other researchers, funding bodies, potential collaborators, prospective students, and the general public. This communication strategy supports the center's goals and objectives therefore a practical and appropriate communication and media program ensures that we use our staff and resources most efficiently and effectively thereby making the center achieve its goals and vision.

### **Background and Focus**

Effective communication is essential to the achievement of ACE-CNTDFB, which is saddled with the responsibility of providing a baseline data bank on the epidemiological status of a number of the neglected tropical diseases that are peculiar to this region for use by governments in formulating health policies among other responsibilities. Therefore, the strategy document sets out the communication plan for ACE-CNTDFB programs ensuring that the goals, target groups, and messages are at the forefront of whatever we intend to do for the center to achieve success.

### **Goal statement**

The goal of the strategy is to strengthen ACE-CNTDFB's communication and media engagement and boost the visibility and profile of ACE-CNTDFB which is to evolve into a reference center for neglected tropical diseases, providing core facilities (sample depositories, database, and vaccine development) in Nigeria, Africa and the world as a whole.

### **Objectives**

One of the objectives of the center is to provide skilled manpower in the diagnosis, management, and prevention of neglected tropical diseases that are currently impeding the social, agricultural, and economic advancement of the West African Sub-region. Therefore, the overall objective of this communication and media strategy is to provide overarching guidance for ACE-CNTDFB so that internal and external publics feel connected to the center and communications officer's work, and the staff are engaged in communication activities and inspired by the center's achievement around the country in line with the mission and vision of ACE.

This strategy aims to inform the public of the impact of this center of excellence while increasing its visibility in the university and Nigeria in general. Specifically, the strategy's objectives include: to improve information sharing both internally and externally, to increase the center's awareness level among applicants of higher degrees in related fields and also raise the profile of the center vis-a-vis its research achievements locally, nationally and internationally. The strategy is intended to be updated to reflect the evolving nature of the center's work.

## **COMMUNICATION PLAN**

One of the objectives of the center is to provide skilled manpower in the diagnosis, management, and prevention of neglected tropical diseases that are currently impeding the social, agricultural, and economic advancement of the West African Sub-region. Only through impactful communications and media can we raise the visibility and understanding of the issues the center seeks to address or achieve and this requires actions across internal and external communication. Hence, the communication and media plan will be managed by the communication and media team at the center. All staff members of the center can contribute to internal and external communications, public information, etc and all staff members can contribute to the content of the internal newsletter, social media page, and the center's website.

### **Internal Communication**

There is no doubt that internal communication influences the quality of external communication. Therefore, it is important to have an adequate internal communication system as it will enhance shared understanding among staff. The aim here is to implement and continuously improve a basic internal communication structure, to improve information sharing to offer staff and students access to different kinds of information, useful for their daily activities.

### **Target Audiences**

- All staff of the center (management, administrative staff, center researchers, etc)
- Students /trainees of the center
- The university community (A.B.U, Zaria).

### **Activities and Tools**

- Increase the usage of the website
- Sharing the center's success stories, event news, etc.
- Internal calendar to share activity notice
- Group messages
- Face-to-face information sharing etc
- Video/slide show/Photo/Inspiring Quotes
- Update the ACE-NTDFB website with information from staff

- Share various campaigns information on WhatsApp pages
- Monthly e-newsletter
- Monthly media monitoring reports
- Group e-mail
- Group opinion polls
- Reinforcement of all communications
- Email of the center should always be included in the addresses
- Seminar programme
- Displays and events
- Student committee
- professional development programmes

## **External Communications**

To increase ACE-NTDFB visibility both in and outside the country, programmes and campaigns key messages will be designed from time to time. The communication strategy will be grounded on set of key messages and goals of the ACE-NTDFB. Each program or campaign will have an activity communication plan tied to communication objectives. The right message ensures a groundswell of support and motivation from the public and right response from the policy makers and government stakeholders as a trustworthy organization. The key social media platforms or channels are what the communication officer/team will engage with to communicate with the general public. ACE-NTDFB will communicate with the general public using different messages and channels.

## **Targets Audiences**

- Government
- National and international research community-university, research organizations, scientific experts
- Partners/collaborating institutions
- Funding bodies
- General community (living in Nigeria and Africa)
- Prospective students
- Potential corporations

## **Activities and Tools**

ACENTDFB will use the following communication tools to engage with the external publics.

- Vibrant and consistent engagement on the center's Facebook, You Tube, Instagram and Twitter pages

- A restructure and update of the ACENTDFB website with an interactive map showing where the center is located in the University
- An accessible and searchable photo archive on the center's website
- A handy short introduction about ACENTDFB for any visitor or new staff
- The use of success stories and outstanding findings of any research conducted in the center is essential as it gives the public more insight into the activities of the center and what impact it has in the community, which is part of result-oriented communication suitable for public information and project support
- Email of the center should always be included in the addresses
- Visitor programmes
- Seminar programme
- Displays and events
- professional development programmes
- ACENTDFB brochure, printed publications with brief, general information about the center's Programmes
- Different promotional material such as pamphlets, pictures, and souvenirs as gift items to candidates attending the Center's workshops or short training
- Pictures and video clips of the centers facility to be shared on social media and mainstream media.
- ACENTDFB blog with opinion pieces and articles from staff and other relevant stakeholder.
- Logo the center's logo should be used in all center's promotional material. Members will encourage to use the logo in their presentations as it is intended to be the identifier of the center and to be used on all center's publications-web, advertisement, letterhead, business cards, reports etc.
- Public symposium to be organized for members to communicate with each other and showcase their work to wider community
- Newsletters – a formal periodic newsletter should be developed

## **MEDIA**

Given the media's importance for result-based communication and the intense growing competition among many organizations for media attention, an active and strategic approach to media relations is pivotal. Strategies to build and deepen media contacts and networks have to be consistent as such strategies will increase the level of media coverage of ACENTDFB activities.

The communication officer, who will be supported by a team, will take lead on media relations and actions across the country at all times. Therefore, all media enquiries should be directed to the media focal point for monitoring and follow-up.

## **Target Audience**

This will entail greater efforts to establish and maintain direct contacts with:

- Mainstream journalist
- Editors
- TV networks
- Radio producers
- Development Communication influencers

## **Activities and Tools**

- Engage the media on a monthly basis to keep the relationship warm even when external activities are low in the center
- Organize courtesy visits to media houses especially during important health related campaign activities
- Media pack for journalist containing information brief
- Media data base containing journalist who cover health and education sectors
- Media visit to the center
- Media training and workshops for Communication officer on how to deal with the media, conducting interview and interview techniques for the centers spoke person etc.
- Media briefings
- Risk management
- Monitoring of news about the center using the Google alerts
- Media works should be monitored to identify lessons learnt and possible areas of improvement

## **Messages**

The key messages to be sent will depend on the various activities, objectives and target audience of that time.

- Outcome of research
- Value of a research for the target audience.
- Information/answers emanated from the research or the issues that it has raised
- How the research links into the center's objectives

## **Overlapping areas**

ICT and Knowledge Management

It is important communications officer /team works closely with ICT personnel to leverage the work by reaching out more people on the center's activities.

## **Budget**

Budget will depend on the center's capability in terms of available finance to be earmarked for the communication unit to carry out the activities mentioned above

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Communication is believed to be a two-way process and there are always opportunities for improvement. Therefore, feedback from members is highly welcome.

How do we measure success?

- Regular check for feedback on social media platforms such as the number of posts and likes/followers, number of web hits on websites, campaigns, frequency of updates, etc.
- General media monitoring of the center's public actions and activities

## **Working Tools**

- Tabloid
- Sim Card (for official line of the center)
- Laptop
- Modem
- Digital Camera