

MASINDI DISTRICT LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION STRATEGY (JULY 2013)

1.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 1.1.1 A joint Leadership Forum of Ministers and Permanent Secretaries from Uganda, Ontario, Canada and the Institute of Public Administration of Canada (IPAC), in September 2006, noted that the Governments communication function was not well coordinated thus affecting the responsiveness of Government Communication to the Public. The Forum found a need to establish an effective Policy Communication Strategy for improved Government Communication.
- 1.1.2 The Ministry Of Information and National Guidance thereafter launched the Government Communication Strategy in 2013 which will be implemented at all levels of Government retrospectively.
- 1.1.3 Based on this background Masindi District Local Government has developed the Communication Strategy to enable effective and efficient dissemination of Government Programmes.
- 1.1.4 Without an effective communications strategy, it would be difficult for Masindi District to address issues of Economic Development and Social transformation; both National and Local, such as the National Agricultural Advisory Services and others.
- 1.1.5 The Uganda Government liberalized the media Industry in the early 1990s, and to this effect, there are currently three licensed Radio Stations in Masindi District. The District's media market is also flooded with press brought in from Kampala every morning. Although Government owned media – Vision Group also has adequate coverage of Masindi, the District Local Government needs to draw a communications strategy in order to effectively compete for audience with the private media.
- 1.1.6 Against this Background, Masindi District Local Government is developing a strategic plan, to guide the District's communication function. This is in line with the office of

President, (Cabinet Secretariat) which developed an integrated Communication Strategy in September 2011 that was launched in 2013.

1.2 The Institutional Framework

The Chief Administrative Officer and the District Information Officer are mandated by Law under the Local Government's Act 1997 to communicate Government Policies and Programmes in the District. Since Local Governments are at the forefront of service delivery, they are strategically placed to engage with the public in identifying issues and information needs of citizens at the grass root level.

2.0 THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

2.1 Purpose

- 2.1.1 The Communications strategy highlights the need for Masindi District Local Government to adopt a proactive and coordinated approach to handling the communication function. The strategy therefore introduces structures within the Local Government, which will be used to communicate its policies aiming at Eco – Social development.
- 2.1.2 The District Communication objectives will define critical target audiences, mechanisms for sharing and exchanging knowledge, synchronize Government media placement, skills and technology in improving the livelihoods of the target communities and define and establish the communication infrastructure in the Public Service.
- 2.1.3 The strategy therefore sets a roadmap that will guide the District in building the communication function as well as promoting the understanding and uptake of new policies and programs for National development among the communities.

2.2 Key Communication Issues

- i. Making Masindi District Local Government visible.
- ii. Being an active and lead player in the fast growing and competing sources of information available to the media, the private sector and the general public.
- iii. Building capacity in terms of human, material, financial and technical resources to effectively handle the increasing demand for information.
- iv. Strengthening internal and external coordination and resourcing of the communication function and to align existing policies and laws to the communication strategy to enable strategic planning and proactive approach to the communication function in the District.
- v. Taking advantage of the existing media to communicate consistently and effectively for the successful implementation of Government policies, programs and projects.
- vi. Developing and implementing structures and accountability mechanisms for effective delivery of the Communication function in the District.
- vii. Use of non conventional media to communicate to the people especially in rural areas.

2.3 Goal of the Communication Strategy

2.3.1 overall Goal

The goal of the Masindi District Local Government's Communication Strategy is to establish an effective, well coordinated and proactive Communication system in the District and with the Public that will meet the District's information needs.

2.3.2 Strategic Objectives

- i. To bring order, discipline and harmony in the District Communication function
- ii. To meet the information needs of the District
- iii. To promote a positive image of Masindi District Local Government and the Government, within and outside Masindi.

2.3.3 Specific Objectives

- i. To develop a mechanisms for the provision of timely, accurate, clear, objective and complete information on Government Policies, programs, services and initiatives to the Public.
- ii. To ensure that communication in the District is well coordinated, effectively managed and are responsive to the diverse information needs of the District.
- iii. To provide a framework to enable Public Servants communicate easily with the Public on policies, services, and initiatives they are familiar with and responsible for.

3.0 ACCOUNTABILITY STRUCTURE

3.1 Masindi District Local Government

According to the Constitution of Uganda Article 189, clause (3), District Councils (Local Governments), shall have the responsibility for any functions and services in the District. To support the communication function across Government therefore, the District Council (Local Government) shall perform the following duties:

- i. Undertake research and information gathering.
- ii. Provide adequate financial, human and logistical support needed for the effective delivery of the Communication function.
- iii. Establish a communication unit.
- iv. Develop Communication material for Masindi District Local Government.
- v. Provide logistics for Local Government events.
- vi. Align and make available all media Communication materials to the office of the Prime Minister and Uganda Media Center to ensure consistency with Government's overall core messages.
- vii. Maintain a website and intranet.
- viii. Maintain an internal Newsletter.
- ix. Inform the Office of the Prime Minister of access to information requests and releases of information.

- x. Assign the District Information Officer to provide information about the local Government.
- xi. Provide recordings of their activities both soft and hard copies to DING for documenting, publicizing and archiving.
- xii. Define local content, electronic or otherwise, set up development and management plan at local Government and harmonize local content management tools and systems with built organizational capacities in collaboration with DING.
- xiii. Establish local content resource centers data banks and archives access at local Government with clear platforms and sharable channels as coordinated by DING.

3.2 Communication Units for Masindi District Local Government

- 3.2.1 The District Local Government should establish a communications unit, which should be headed by a senior officer at the level of Principal, answerable to the Chief Administrative Officer and working in liaison with the coordination Unit, Directorate of Information and National Guidance (DING), and the Office of the Prime Minister.
- 3.2.2 The communication unit is to be supported by a fully resourced budget to enable it perform its functions. It is proposed that it should be a policy for all Government projects and programmes to allocate at least 8% of the funds to publicity, information, dissemination and advocacy.
- 3.2.3 The District Information Office will develop a capacity building program to address the needs of the Communication function in the District. Journalists, Communication practitioners, public Relation Officers among others will undergo regular re – orientation trainings.

3.3 Learning and Development

3.3.1 Key Objectives

- i. Strengthen strategic Communication capacity for leaders and Communication staff.
- ii. Enhance professionalism of Communication staff.
- iii. Develop a pool of Communication Professionals.
- iv. Enhance advocacy and persuasion of Government programs.

The strategy will focus on the following training priorities:

- i. Develop capacity to identify skills gaps.
- ii. Identify key audiences for training and develop learning manuals for each group (e.g. communication Officers, media spokespersons, political leaders etc)
- iii. Event Management (coordination with security, Protocol, event companies)
- iv. Train the trainers or identify external staff who can lead courses.

4.0 NEW COMMUNICATION ILLUSTRATED

4.1 Audiences for the Communication Strategy

The Communication Strategy sets out to consistently reach out, share and exchange information with the core audiences at the household, community, National and International levels. These include:

Internal Audience

This may include the District Executive Committee, staff of Masindi District Local Government, Councilors etc

External Audience which will involve the media, Traditional or Cultural Leaders, Religious Leaders, Civil Society Organizations, the Public and Education / Training Institutions.

5.0 ISSUES MANAGEMENT

5.1 Reading the media and emerging issues

5.1.1 This refers to the assessment of issues in deciding the best approach to communicate so as to allow the District to position itself on issues in a way that best suits circumstances at the time and decide whether to contain, confront, embrace or expand on the issue.

5.1.2 The District communication team shall actively track media actors' views, opinions and comments as well as media reports to anticipate the direction of debate and develop the best messages for the situation. This will allow the District to monitor stakeholders' reaction and determine the political, economic and social dimension of the debate or issue.

Communication Management Approach

Table 1

Messaging Approach	Purpose:	Broad Messaging
Contain	To minimize spread of the issue	“We’re going to review the situation...” “We’ll work with our Partners to come up with a solution.” “We shall consult further”
Confront	To be strong, bold and challenge your critics	“That is not correct... here is the situation” “We want to get it right – and that will take time.”
Embrace	To join the cause and agree that action is required.	“We’re doing a good job, but more needs to be done”
Expand	Place the situation in a context of larger considerations	“There are so many things to consider here and we are not going to rush into it.” “Its part of a larger issue we’re currently reviewing.”
Deflect	Don’t take ownership of the issue, keep the District on the periphery	“We have full confidence that the District will address this issue....” “The reality is, this is a (XY) responsibility.”
Attack	To be aggressive, switch channels by questioning the record or motives of critics	“When they were in power, they had an opportunity to fix this but they did nothing.” “They are in no position to be critical of our record.”

5.1.3

The process of managing an issue requires clear identification of the issues that the District is dealing with to avoid reacting to symptoms of the problem. The strategy lays out guidelines for developing an appropriate Issues Management Strategy within the broad framework. It defines the point at which the issues are identified, a strategy developed, messages/products are produced and when media briefings are conducted. The effects of the District’s

action are reviewed until the issue is resolved and the status quo is re – established.

5.2 Crisis Management

5.2.1 The Purpose of the communication effort during a crisis or disaster is to Educate, Reassure, Guide and be accountable to the key stakeholders and the general public. This will ensure that the District stays in control of the situation as well as keep the public calm and positively contributing to resolving the crisis.

5.2.2 Defining a Crisis

A crisis is any major unpredictable event that threatens to harm an organization, its stakeholders, or general public. Crises include, among others, natural crises such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, floods, droughts that threaten life, property and the environment, disease outbreaks, conflicts, fires and any other issue that the District may deem to constitute a crisis.

In a crisis, the District is faced with the element of surprise and short decision time. To avoid panic, the District needs to plan ahead to manage the crisis including a Crisis Communication Plan

5.3 Objective of Crisis Communication

5.3.1 the objective of Crisis Communication is to:

- i. Demonstrate that the District is prepared to respond to public Communication needs
- ii. To assure the public that the crisis / challenge will be managed well
- iii. Educate the public on any issue that affects them
- iv. Provide consistent, coordinated and effective public Communication
- v. Ensure that the public (stakeholders) have access to transparent, accessible, accurate, real time information that will help them respond effectively to the crisis.

5.4 Crisis Management Policy, Plan and Key responsibilities

5.4.1 The District Information Office shall develop a (living and detailed) Crisis Management Plan that identifies the key responsibilities, the required action and the necessary resources to implement the plan.

5.4.2 An abridged version shall be publicized and internalized by all stakeholders. The detailed Crisis Management Plan shall be regularly updated and rehearsed – before crisis – ‘Be Prepared not scared’ approach.

5.5 District Communication Team

5.5.1 The strategy proposes the establishment of a permanent District Crisis Communication team whose purpose among other things, is to provide media leadership, review critical emerging issues and give policy and strategic guidance and decision making in the District. The team shall be composed of:

- Chair: The District Information Officer
- Members-
 - i. The Resident District Commissioner
 - ii. Chief Finance Officer
 - iii. The District Internal Security Officer
 - iv. The Principal Assistant Secretary
 - v. The Sector Head of Department (where crisis is),
 - vi. The Office of the Information Officer shall be the Secretariat to the District Communication team

5.6 Declaration of a Crisis and its Management

5.6.1 During a major Crisis, the District communication unit will work closely with the District Communication Team. The District Communication Team will declare the disaster / crisis in accordance with the agreed parameters of the Policy and Plan.

5.6.2 The District Crisis Communication Unit will be the sole authority for any publishing or broadcasting of major policy statements on the crisis after full discussion with the District Team, and issue other statements and clarifications as warranted as the crisis / disaster unfolds.

5.6.3 The Chief Administrative Officer shall be the official Spokesperson on the crisis; she/he will issue and conduct regular press briefings with technical guidance from relevant Government MDAs.

5.7 Communication Unit's Role

- 5.7.1 The District Communication unit shall be guided by the National Crisis Management Policy.
- 5.7.2 Together with the Ministry, the District Communication Unit will handle only sector specific crisis Communication as delegated by the National Crisis Communication Team.
- 5.7.3 The District Communication Team and the Ministry will provide regular updates to the National Crisis Communication Team and the Uganda Media Center on the Crisis.

Masindi District Local Government will monitor the issues on daily basis to support the work of Information and National Guidance (ING) which will undertake 24/7 monitoring of issues in the media.

6.0 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

6.1 Communication strategy implementation matrix

Table II: Defining Communication needs, activities, responsibility centre and outputs

Specific objective 1: To ensure that communication across the District is well coordinated, effectively managed and area responsive to the diverse information needs of the public				
Communication need	Activities	Responsible Person(s)	Time frame	Output indicator
Establish a governing structure to coordinate and manage communication of the District Policies and programmes	Develop and implement a District Communication strategy Establish structures to implement the strategy Appoint personnel for implementation Setup communication planning	CAO and Office of the Information Officer		A fully fledged Communication strategy Number of staff deployed Policies and programmes with integrated communication plan Communication Assessment, equipped communication units and a

	<p>modalities integrated in policy formulation and submission</p> <p>Align and coordinate Communication function across the District along with Retooling and capacity building</p> <p>Sensitize Officers about the District Communication strategy and responsibilities</p>			<p>number of Officers sensitized on the District Communication Strategy</p>
--	--	--	--	---

Specific Objective 2: To provide mechanisms for the provision of timely, accurate, clear, objective and complete information on District Policies, programs, services and initiatives to citizens.

Communication need	Activities	Responsible person	Time Frame	Output indicators
<p>Identification and establishment of channel (tools) of communication</p>	<p>Clear channels of communication identified in the multi channel approach to reach all audiences and ensure greater responsiveness</p> <p>A media relations plan to enhance trust and maximize the positive attributes of the</p>	<p>District Information Officer</p>		<p>Number of channels of communication defined</p> <p>A media relations plan developed</p>

	media in communicating District Policies			
	Defining communication responsibilities			Well defined communication responsibilities
	Staff training on clear communication	Human Resources Sector		Number of staff trained in clear communication

- 6.2 The anticipated outcomes as a result of the implementation of the Communication strategy will be:
- I. Harmonized messages to the public
 - II. Improved responsiveness to public information needs
 - III. Better informed public, media
 - IV. Reduced ambiguity and conflicting communication
 - V. Increased Government awareness of public opinion
 - VI. Improved capacity to manage opinion and attitudes through effective communication
 - VII. Improved service delivery
 - VIII. Improved Government implementation of policies, programmes and projects
 - IX. Increased access to public information
 - X. Balanced and accurate print, radio and television reporting
 - XI. Increased transparency and accountability of the District.

7.0 KEY PRIORITIES AND CORE MESSAGES

The Communication Plan identifies key District priorities, policies, programmes, issues and approaches to communication. The key priorities are economic management, Good Governance, Production, competitiveness and income, security, conflict resolution, Disaster management and Human development.

7.1 Economic management

The key message on economic management will be to ensure the District is working to assure prosperity for all by improving household savings, access to low interest credit, economic growth, and commercialization of agriculture and value addition, market access a Diversification of agriculture.

The District is also mandated to ensure that it attracts investment in the private sector by provision of tax breaks, land re development and enacting by laws

7.2 Good Governance

Good Governance implies democracy, respect of human rights, transparency and a pre-requisite for development. The District shall ensure that the public is sensitized of the existing laws and also increase awareness.

7.3 Production

Focus will be put on increasing agricultural productivity and incomes especially for the poor rural households by ensuring access to low interest credit, supporting agricultural mechanism and agro processing, focus will also be put on addressing crop pests and livestock diseases, provision of high yielding seeds and planting materials.

7.4 Disaster Management

The District is enhancing its capacity to respond to and manage disasters and will ensure the District Disaster Management Plan is implemented.

7.5 Health

The District will provide access to Health care and will ensure health promotion on disease prevention, maternal and child health, and provide prevention management and control of communicable and non communicable diseases.

7.6 Education

The District will ensure there is education for all through the UPE and USE Programmes.

7.7 Water and Sanitation

Masindi is mandated to provide safe water supply and delivery in rural and urban areas through construction, maintenance and operation of water supply systems. It will also provide improved sanitation both in Rural and urban.

8.0 MEASURING AND REPORTING RESULTS.

8.1 Developing the Plan

The Office of the Information Officer will liaise with the Monitoring and Evaluation matrix in the Planning Unit will lead a process to develop a Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism that will assess the performance of the communication function against set targets, roles and responsibilities of the different sectors in the District.