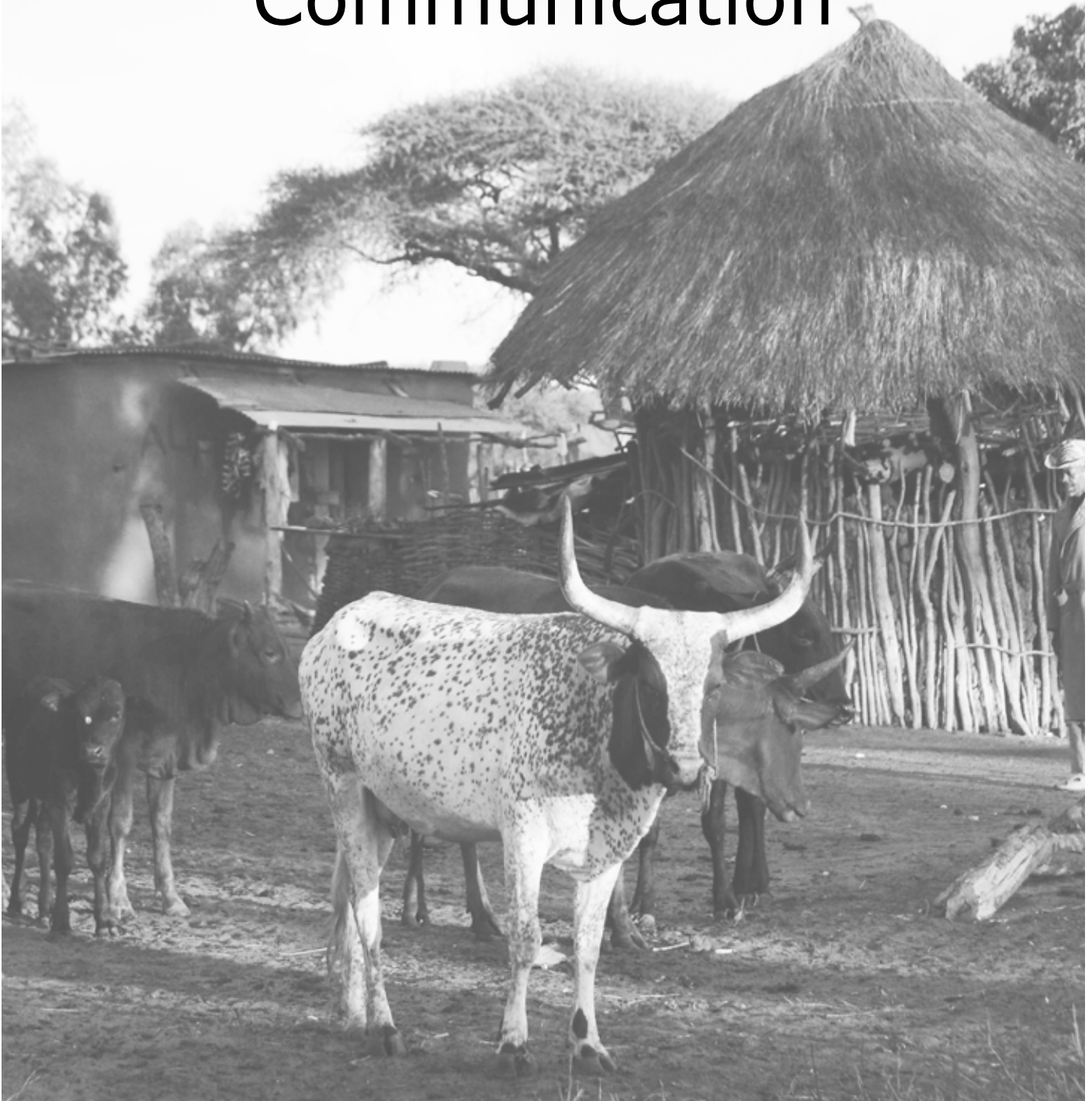


Review of ILRI's External Communication



Megan Lloyd-Laney for CommsConsult Ltd.
May 12th 2011

CONTENTS PAGE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
1. BACKGROUND TO THE REVIEW	6
2 THE ILRI BRAND: HOW THE ORGANISATION PRESENTS ITSELF TO THE WORLD	6
2.1 WIDE RANGE OF HIGH-QUALITY, MULTI-MEDIA PRODUCTS	6
2.2 THOUGHT LEADERS ON INFORMATION AND DATA MANAGEMENT.	7
2.3 ACTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA TO INCREASE ENGAGEMENT.	8
2.4 FACE-TO-FACE ENGAGEMENT.	10
2.5 USING THE MEDIA.....	10
3. COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY IN ORDER TO BE INFLUENTIAL	10
3.1 CORPORATE IDENTITY, IMAGE, REPUTATION AND INFLUENCE.....	11
3.2 PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION	12
4 CHALLENGES TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION	15
4.1 STAFF RUNNING TOO FAST TO BE STRATEGIC ABOUT COMMUNICATING.....	15
4.2 INCENTIVES FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AND PARTNERSHIPS.....	15
4.3 ACTIVE DISINCENTIVES EXIST FOR STAFF TO BE EFFECTIVE AMBASSADORS.....	15
4.4 WHAT IS THE ORGANISATION’S MANDATE ANYWAY?	16
4.5 MASSIVE UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE FUTURE	16
4.6 GLOBAL INFLUENCE VS EAST AFRICA PRESENCE.....	17
4.7 COMMUNICATIONS TEAM STRUCTURE	17
5 RECOMMENDATIONS.....	18
5.1 BE MORE PURPOSEFUL IN COMMUNICATIONS CHOICES.....	18
5.2 PRODUCE MORE SYNTHESSES AROUND TOPICAL DEBATES.....	19
5.3 FINETUNE COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES	20
5.4 PROFESSIONALISE AND BUILD CADRE OF COMMUNICATION STAFF	20
5.5 MAKE IT EASIER FOR ILRI STAFF TO COMMUNICATE THE ORGANISATION	20
5.6 MAKE IT EASIER FOR ALL KINDS OF MEDIA TO FIND AND REPORT ILRI’S WORK	21
5.7 MAKING BETTER USE OF MONITORING INFORMATION	21

ANNEXES

- A. INTERIM FINDINGS PRESENTATION TO ILRI MANAGEMENT GROUP FEB 23RD 2011
- B. LIST OF EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED
- C. COMMUNICATIONS HEALTHCHECK
 - C1: BLOGS
 - C2: TWITTER
 - C3: FACEBOOK
 - C4: PHOTOS
 - C5: AUDIO-VISUAL
 - C6: YOUTUBE
 - C7: BLIP TV
 - C8: PODCASTS
 - C9: INFORMATION PRODUCT TYPES
 - C10: FEEDS
 - C11: WHOSE PERSPECTIVE?
- D. ILRI WEBSITE USERS’ SURVEY RESPONSES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1 INTRODUCTION TO THE REVIEW

The consultant was invited to carry out a 'Communications Review' of ILRI with objectives to include an audit of 'outward-facing' communication activities including social media platforms; a critique of 2006 Communication Strategy; and an analysis of the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization's structures and development of an Operational Plan. The consultant visited both ILRI campuses during February 2011 (Ethiopia 16th – 20th February; Kenya 20th – 25th February), and conducted interviews with 17 staff in Ethiopia and 23 staff in Kenya as part of a schedule put together by KMIS and PA teams across the two campuses. She also conducted a limited number of interviews with relevant external professionals, personally and by phone.

2 FINDINGS

ILRI is working in 'a crowded field of providers of knowledge, technology, and capacity development'. It is crucial therefore that the organisation is crystal clear about the unique brand of knowledge and services it delivers in the field of science 'at the intersect of poverty and livestock' – and up-front about its track record in delivering results. Purposeful and strategic communication around issues that ILRI has the reputation to speak about, and that resonate with current – and emerging – debates, is the key to being heard and advancing the position and potential of livestock farmers globally.

The organisation has established for itself a professional brand and impressive publishing record for communicating its diverse research products and thinking 'in real time'. A two-pronged process of embedding strategic communication in all research programmes (through a combination of incentives and quality assurance protocols) and being more focused and strategic on key target audiences and issues, will create the necessary conditions for ILRI to effectively communicate its research. This process requires not so much radical overhauls as clear stewardship, leadership and support from management to enable more strategic communication to be required where it is absent, and to flourish where it is latent. There is recognition that staff are already massively busy and, in some cases, over-stretched: honing down on key audiences and a small number of issues could help ILRI to 'sharpen and deepen' its reputation without losing the diversity of research that will enable it to be relevant in the next decade.

Information And Communication Products And Services

ILRI communicates a complex array of research projects and programmes to multiple audiences using a range of innovative products and information services. Printed, exhibition and photographic materials are professionally presented to a high standard and cover a diverse set of topics. The range and reach of ILRI printed materials is high; photos of the highest quality are well categorised and made easily accessible to others to use; exhibition materials and visuals are regarded as 'elegant' and 'dramatic', and particularly effective when used as part of a broader campaign with appropriate messaging for the convened audience.

Recent innovations in the way that ILRI captures, categorises and shares its research information ensure that research is being communicated 'in real time' as it is published. This, and the active use of web2.0 platforms is creating for the organisation a reputation as 'thought leaders' on data management, and taking research information to audiences who do not need to know about the organisation itself, or its website, in order to consume up-to-date research information. The

growing audiences for ILRI research content is witness to the effectiveness of this approach, e.g. audiences to the main ILRI blog have increased ten-fold in the last year. This is a powerful Unique Selling Point for ILRI as it enters the new world of CG 'mega-projects'. There is further to go in ensuring these communication channels are genuinely 'two-way' channels so that ILRI can both listen to what others have to say about their findings and analysis, and enter into genuine debates around research and its place in development policy and practice.

The overhaul of the website in October 2010 makes full use of the content being generated by both editorial and research staff through the 16 blogs. This 'automated content generation' gives the site a dynamism that is both resource-efficient and fresh-looking. The site is by far the most popularly-visited medium, receiving in excess of 1.9m during 2010. There is, however, need to balance the dynamic content with more compelling narratives about key debates, and to address the logistical challenges of editorial teams who are split across the two ILRI campuses. Blogs have been important tactics in getting research staff and their teams more closely involved in the communication of their research content, and whilst the blogs have yet to realise their potential for two-way communication, it is still early days.

Face-to-face engagement is crucial for an organisation that has a strategic reason for being located in Africa. Both the Nairobi and Addis Ababa campuses are reputational assets for ILRI but in order to maximise the potential of their location, criteria should be set to maximise the potential of visitors 'adding value' to ILRI's work e.g. by prioritising those from key stakeholder groups, advocacy targets, the media etc. The outsourcing of media work through Burness Communication has shown some impressive results – including reaching an estimated 200m audience through 15 media campaigns since 2007 – but there are downsides including costs, time, and delegating critical media relationships to a third party organisation. ILRI should set itself some concrete media targets including becoming 'global experts' on a small number of emerging debates and positioning itself as the media's 'critical friend'.

Positioning the organisation to be heard

There is a strong feeling that ILRI has 'missed the boat' and/or 'failed to make themselves heard clearly' on some prominent visible issues to date, although there are also some clear issues on which people feel the organisation has 'added value' and nuanced the debate. There is increasing appetite (both internally and externally) for the organisation to go beyond promoting arguments that are 'obviously wholesome but not compelling' rather than providing robust livestock-based solutions to other people's development problems and challenges. There are important and emerging debates to which ILRI could both contribute and lead, and with better and more strategic use of key influentials to articulate some of the more controversial arguments, ILRI is well positioned to lead the arguments on behalf of the world's livestock owners.

There **is** tension between communicating science and advocacy, particularly for ILRI's scientists who believe that getting involved in influencing policymakers or taking a particular stand on any issue (besides pro-poor development around livestock options) questions their objectivity as scientists and compromises the position of the institution in the future. But it **is** possible to take a position that **achieves both** if ILRI positions itself as *the organisation which seeks to shift the terms of the debate*, and presents itself as the obvious choice to *explain and interpret* the evidence on both sides and to convene multiple voices – including diverse southern voices – to articulate the complexity and choices available within each debate.

Communicating Effectively in order to be influential

Leading thinkers on the research-policy nexus agree that, in order to be influential, researchers and their institutions have to be first, explicit and intentional in their desire to inform policymaking processes and people; second, need to take into account the political contexts; third, need to understand and make relevant their research to the audience; and fourth, should be strategic and tactical about exploiting links. Communication offers a unique set of tactical tools to deliver on all four pre-conditions but the activities need to be purposeful, planned, adequately resourced, and explicitly aligned to the organisation's overall mission to be truly effective. Otherwise they are successful only in taking up organisational time and resources; making people look busy; creating noise and bustle; and tying up smart professionals.

Strategic communication requires both **management commitment** to, and **staff ownership** over the organisation's communication work. Activities should be closely aligned to the organisation's broader goals. For this to happen, senior staff should be seen to lead and endorse external communication priorities, and all staff need to recognise and be empowered to communicate ILRI's research and ambitions. The role of **partners and effective partnerships** in delivering both research and development outcomes, and in building reputation and helping ILRI to be influential, cannot be overstated. Partners should not be considered as 'the competition' (even if they are providing similar services and research capabilities) and ILRI should 'walk and talk' collaboration if it is to be more influential.

Knowledge management measures put in place as a result of a strategic overview (2009) have addressed many of the problems identified in the report, and has shown real progress in building both internal systems and supporting (and inspiring) research staff to be more effective communicators. There is demand for more strategic communication inputs to programmes and projects and recognition by most of the senior researchers that this needs to be funded out of programme funds. There are mixed views about whether the 'embedded' communications people had delivered the desired results within programmes. Reasons for this vary, but other organisational experiences show that embedded communications staff, given adequate support and mandate and with a strategic brief and appropriate skills, can make a huge difference in realising the potential of research to be taken up used.

There is not enough clarity of purpose or strategy that would explain to ILRI staff the organisation's priorities for external communication. This absence allows staff to interpret the mission differentially (e.g. some see its role to communicate with other CG centres and not civil society; others see its mandate to communicate exclusively with the academic community; others to global policymakers). Clearer articulation and explanation of its target audiences and communication purpose, and uptake pathway/theory of change in which this fits the organisation's broader mission, would help.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

BE MORE PURPOSEFUL IN COMMUNICATIONS CHOICES

1. Make clear the organisation's commitment to communicating its message externally at the highest level of Management; ensure the agenda has a 'champion' at Board level and expand the Advisory Board to include research uptake and communications expertise.
2. Develop a Theory of Change for the organisation (building on Outcome Mapping) which describes uptake pathways for research evidence and external communication messages.

3. Prioritise who are the organisation's key audiences and in each case identify what you want them to KNOW about ILRI and its work; what you want them to THINK about you; and what is the BEHAVIOUR you want them to display towards you.
4. Take seriously the recommendations of the recent review of partnerships, and seek to create and exploit reputational capital by building and maintaining healthy partnerships.

PRODUCE MORE SYNTHESSES AROUND TOPICAL DEBATES

5. Build an external profile that is less based on how good and important livestock are to poor people, and more based around how livestock options provide tangible (i.e. costed and fully articulated) solutions to the problems of other agricultural and development approaches.
6. Capture and publish on ILRI website the half dozen 'big issue' arguments that the organisation is leading on and contributing to.

FINETUNE COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

7. Require all new research programmes (including those falling outside of CRPs) to be explicit and intentional about their communication, engagement and partnerships ambitions. Make it part of quality assurance process for sign-off. Nominate responsibility at Board level.

PROFESSIONALISE AND BUILD CADRE OF COMMUNICATION STAFF

8. Develop a professional cadre of communication staff across the organisation, with sets of 'core capabilities and skills' that relate clearly to function that apply to both central communication staff and within programmes ('embedded' staff within each thematic area).

MAKE IT EASIER FOR ILRI STAFF TO COMMUNICATE THE ORGANISATION

9. Help ILRI staff who are not 'front of house' presenters but are still ambassadors for the organisation, to be kept informed about the achievements and key issues being addressed by ILRI's ongoing work.
10. Create a professional powerpoint presentation that all staff can use as add-on to their own technical presentations, and clear identity guidelines to ensure global brand is maintained.
11. Develop a Translation Strategy and ensure external materials reflect the global nature of ILRI's livestock work in all aspects of presentation (photos, text, issues, nature of challenges etc.) so that all staff find relevance for their particular audiences.

MAKE IT EASIER FOR ALL KINDS OF MEDIA TO FIND AND REPORT ILRI'S WORK

12. Make it easier for the media to find you and your spokespersons on key issues.
13. Make more systematic use of the existing information services, networks and channels that exist to bring agricultural and sustainable development information to different user groups.
14. Join in other people's debates (particularly the ones that resonate with your key issue areas).
15. Show and Tell results/impact more aggressively where it counts

MAKING BETTER USE OF MONITORING INFORMATION

16. Track citations of key publications to see where they are being picked up and used as part of systematic M+E. Ensure there is a specific and regular slot for discussion of the organisation's strategic communication and its results at every meeting to review progress and impact on key debates.

1. BACKGROUND TO THE REVIEW

The consultant was invited to carry out a 'Communications Review' of ILRI with five specific objectives as follows:

- Audit of "outward-facing" communication activities including social media platforms (with a view to making recommendations on how to maximize their reach and effectiveness).
- Critique of 2006 Communication Strategy to identify how to maximize ILRI's communication effectiveness in the future.
- Analysis of the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization's structures (systems and processes) that are responsible for ILRI's external communications and development of an Operational Plan to help to realize ILRI's communication potential with specified target audiences (over a period of 3 years).
- Presentation to staff (with tentative findings and recommendations).
- Written report capturing the above. Recommend max 12 pages with annexes showing consultant's workings.

The consultant visited both ILRI campuses during February 2011 (Ethiopia Wednesday 16th – 20th February; Kenya Sunday 20th – 25th) and conducted interviews with 17 staff in Ethiopia and 23 staff in Kenya as part of a schedule put together by KMIS and PA teams across the two campuses. A 'first thoughts' presentation of issues and provisional findings was given to the Management and Team Leaders' Meeting on Wednesday 23rd April (presentation included as Annex A). A small number of interviews were also conducted with relevant external professionals, personally and by phone after the ILRI visit (Annex B)

The consultant carried out a 'Communications Healthcheck' of ILRI's public materials (analysis available in a spreadsheet as Annex C). The healthcheck takes best practice criteria for effective communication and reviews the full range of ILRI's external information against them. Relevant analysis and highlights are integrated into the report in Section 2 and recommendations for improving effectiveness have been incorporated into Section 4.

2 THE ILRI BRAND: HOW THE ORGANISATION PRESENTS ITSELF TO THE WORLD

ILRI communicates a complex array of research projects and programmes to multiple audiences using a range of innovative products and information services. A small e-survey shows that current users find ILRI content 'easy to understand' and 'relevant to their work', and say that they have used the information in their work (Graph 4 Annex D). They find the content they are looking for and learn something new and find the mix of formats 'useful'. Although a small sample of people who have already 'found' ILRI (e-survey was posted on the website) these are the 'right/desirable' kinds of answers for the services.

Section 3.1 of the report discusses each communication product and service in turn; and Section 3.2 reviews how the overall portfolio contributes to the organisational mission.

2.1 WIDE RANGE OF HIGH-QUALITY, MULTI-MEDIA PRODUCTS

Exhibition materials and large posters. The branding is regarded as 'elegant' and 'dramatic' and memorable, particularly effective in public convened spaces e.g. exhibitions and conference where there is a big profile. There is a suggestion that the branding needs a 'refresh', although this comes from communications and graphics professionals rather than the general development or research audiences.

The availability of a high-quality reprographics in-house ILRI makes possible the generation of large posters and visual materials for public display and there is potential for this facility to be exploited more fully through the new CRPs. The consultant was made aware of an ongoing Audit of the Reprographics Unit, but has not seen the results. There is a temptation to produce beautiful and dramatic visuals **because it is possible to do so** rather than because the materials are part of a strategic communication plan. It is

recommended that exhibition materials and posters are used to support larger scale campaigns and the organisation's key issues; that they are costed as part of campaigns, and any evaluations include the extent to which the images and messages carried through these 'big print' products are remembered.

Printed materials

The range and reach of ILRI printed materials is high: 175,000 print services and posters were delivered during 2010, including 47,000 hard copy documents distributed. Around 70 reports were published in the same time period, assisted by the Editorial and Publications teams. ILRI Calendars are ('which define ILRI' and 'which are beautiful but why are we still spending money on them?') are loved by staff and in demand by many who don't have their own copies, but their high quality print production comes at a cost. As part of themed campaigns that carry messages 'drip-fed' over 12 months to specific audiences, the calendars could find another purpose in life beyond a corporate one.

There is high demand from research teams for 'help with writing for different audiences' but they cannot get as much help as they need, or they cannot find the levels of technical expertise (either in-house or externally) needed to 'translate' technical work into layperson/policymaker language. Many are willing to pay, and some team leaders say that they would be keen to identify demand for this kind of work at annual planning time, and resource it out of their budgets. Editorial and publication teams do a capable job of production management, but there was some disappointment that the Publishing Committee doesn't effectively 'pump prime' information across the portfolio of ILRI research. The recently approved (April 2010) Institutional Strategy on Research Publishing does an effective job at outlining the hierarchy of information which should be able to service many different audiences, as well as disseminate 'in process' research and final results.

Audio visual materials¹

ILRI has developed a well-earned reputation for high-quality photographic stills and films. These are available through ILRI's YouTube², BlipTV³, Podomatic⁴, and Flickr social media platforms, where they are available for access and download for free. Interest in these audio visuals is high: around 12,000 views during 2009 rose to 119,000 the following year.

All resources are catalogued and tagged to maximise accessibility. Photos⁵ of the highest quality are categorised into 72 sets, and themed into 28 topics for those looking for specific visuals. Films/videos are published on both YouTube and BlipTV because each platform brings different merits e.g. size of audience, quality and size of file, length of film allowed, ways in which you can engage and comment and share the products with others etc. These existing resources are excellent 'sticky materials' for the media and other development actors interested in illustrating livestock arguments and more use should be made to utilise the 'spare footage' from previous professionally-shot film.

A professionally-produced five minute film is enormously costly compared to the equivalent five-minute document or slideshow: but of course it brings to life the drama and emotional appeal of issues that can otherwise appear dry, worthy and distant. Where this emotional engagement is required *in order to start a longer conversation with important stakeholders, or to capture attention of the busy, or to challenge stereotypes*, these powerful, well scripted and engaging communication products are invaluable and can have profound impact. But each one needs to be 'fit for purpose' and this requires the organisation to think through more purposefully how each product can add value within any situation. Many communications-savvy research organisations are moving towards the 'talking heads' style of videos because they are cheap and 'instant' to generate; respond to audience's increasing demand for multimedia outputs; and can be generated by non-specialists with a little bit of guidance. The PA's piloting of 'talking slideshows' is interesting as way of utilising existing dramatic footage and should be encouraged to investigate what role they could play in communicating specific issues within broader campaigns.

2.2 THOUGHT LEADERS ON INFORMATION AND DATA MANAGEMENT.

Recent innovations in the way that ILRI captures, categorises and shares its research information through Mahider ensures that research is being communicated 'in real time' as it is published. This, and the active use of web2.0 platforms is creating for the organisation a reputation as 'thought leaders' on data management, which is a strong entry point as partners in the new CG programmes. The database is now an almost complete repository of ILRI research⁶ with x outputs: in 2010 an estimated 4600 items were added to Mahider which attracted more than 270,000 views⁷ (see Annex D Graph 1 showing outputs). This is a real change to the way that ILRI manages its information and has resulted in much more visible research products that can 'travel' and be easily incorporated into other people's information services. Mahider allows anyone to search the ILRI repository of information products fairly easily, although it is not intuitive for the first time visitor.

As data is entered, it is tagged and produced as feeds (using feedburner, an 'opt-in' information service that allows people to subscribe to particular categories of information which meet their needs). E-alerts are produced for 15 categories of information, relating to both topic area (e.g. markets, gender, sustainable livelihoods etc.) and product type (e.g. posters, audio visuals) as information is entered onto the ILRI database. The e-alerts are sent by email regularly to those who 'sign-up': the service clusters together many information outputs into one email to avoid the irritation of too many emails. Annex D Graph 2 provides a snapshot of this service for each of the 15 categories, which range from no alerts for Sustainable Livestock Futures for the period February 1st – March 25th to nine individual alerts containing 40 research outputs for Poverty and Gender (the generic category of Research which shows all categories shows 29 individual alerts containing 128 individual research outputs for the same period).

Broader information management systems, such as databases that are actively managed to support key stakeholders (be they funders, key influentials, media, partners) are not noticeably smart.

Website www.ilri.org

The website was refreshed in October 2010 to make full use of the content generated through ILRI's multimedia platforms. This means that content is constantly being refreshed automatically, giving the site a dynamism that is both resource-efficient and fresh-looking. The site is by far the most popularly-visited medium (see Annex D: Graph 3), receiving in excess of 1.8 million page views in 2009, increasing to in excess of 1.9m during 2010. More than 14,000 documents were downloaded from the site over during 2010, with the single most popular being the ILRI Communication Strategy (1079 downloads), followed closely by Livestock and Women's Livelihoods: A review of the recent evidence (933 downloads). A quick survey conducted for the purposes of the review showed the vast majority having used the website (93% followed by next most popular being photos 50% of all those surveyed).

There is some internal tension within the organisation about whether the 'pendulum has swung too far' in the shift from static content (i.e. written by people and published onto the site) to dynamic content (generated automatically as 'feeds' from other ILRI platforms). For some, this means that the site is 'bitty', with windows displaying what's new from other places, but not crafting a compelling narrative about any one topic or issue. There are logistical difficulties posed by editorial staff (Paul, Muthoni, Susan) being separated from those that manage the website content (KMIS in Addis) and frustrations because of this. There is potential to create a series of compelling arguments around key debates and publish it on the site to create 'depth' (using content generated from other ILRI products). It is important to note that for all content, you need to bring it to the attention of your desired audiences: there are an estimated 1 trillion web pages in existence (Bing 2010) and important people especially need to be courted (either directly or indirectly by others recommending ILRI content).

2.3 ACTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA TO INCREASE ENGAGEMENT.

ILRI There is an impressive range of social media platforms being developed to communicate the wide range of ILRI work to its different target audiences (Annex D Graph 3). These platforms are attracting increasing audiences, although not yet realising their full potential as two-way engagement channels: it is early days however and with continued attention on the development and promotion of these platforms to specific

audiences, this engagement is likely to grow. Dramatic increases in the traffic to, in particular the News blog www.ilri.org/ilrinews (increased tenfold between 2009-2010 from a baseline of around 5,000 hits⁸) and the continued popularity of e.g. ILRI clippings <http://ilriclippings.wordpress.com/> (157,000 hits to date) show the potential of these platforms to meet actual demand for ILRI information. The concurrent fall in website users as blog traffic has increased is neither a great surprise nor particular cause for alarm as it settles in as the 'front door' for ILRI's information content being hosted elsewhere.

Blogs in particular, have been an important tactic in getting research staff and their teams more closely involved in the communication of their research content and issues around process of research for development. There have been some successes with the 'embedding' of communication personnel within research teams and more could be done to realise the potential of this approach, with due recognition that both an 'enabling environment' as well as a core set of communication skills are necessary to delivering results beyond mere administrative support to programmes.

Blogs: There are 16 blogs set up (Annex C1:Blogs), which analyses each blog against 'best practice' as advocated by CG ICT-KM team). Although none of the blogs have coherent links to the others, some of them do link back to the ILRI main website and to other sites of relevant donor organizations. A list on the landing page of each blog linking to all the other ILRI blogs would not only allow users to navigate easily between them but also help to make clear the role each of them plays within the communication strategy.

Some of the blogs do not have clear 'about' sections and do not explain the project they are posting articles about. On the other hand, some are very good and give a thorough breakdown of the project, along with its duration, key objectives, budget, achievements and outcomes. The most influential blogs balance authoritative writing with the personal voice, and it would be good to feature more of the latter in some of the more active blogs, with a little more information on the writers/contributors of each blog, perhaps showing their involvement in ILRI or the specific project.

The content of the blogs vary in tone, formality, length, and technical detail. The target audience of each blog needs to be considered carefully in order to ensure that each one is meeting the requirements of its readers. The 'comments' feed on some of the blogs are quite confusing, and ILRI's other social media platforms do not feature across all of the blogs. It would be good to have a box on the landing page of all the blogs with links to the ILRI Twitter account and Facebook page to encourage users to engage with other channels and ILRI content.

Twitter account⁹: The content is good: all tweets link to blog posts and news from the ILRI website and blogs and therefore aim to direct traffic back to the ILRI website. More than 2,000 tweets have been sent since the account was set up. Best practice states that 'Twitter people tend to click on things that are not self-promoting but that promote content'¹⁰: the ILRI account adheres to this.

The ILRI account features in 34 lists by other Tweeters and has created one list of their own (consisting of nine communication connections). **Engagement** is the one key element missing from the ILRI Twitter account. Although their follower count is strong (498), they follow only five people and no one manually manages the account. All the Tweets are automated through a feed generator. In order to get the most from this platform, Chris Brogan highlights the importance of communicating with followers by 'being useful, helpful, sharing content and using @replies'.

Using a Twitter managing tool such as HootSuite would allow ILRI to engage with followers, reply to their enquiries, RT interesting articles and build up a network of people who will respond to the content you are posting. Building the following further through some engagement would increase traffic back to the blogs and main website, and further the reach of the information and research they are publishing. There is obviously an investment cost to any move away from automated content on the ILRI twitter site, and human interaction which is required for participating in conversations. Like other communication tactics, it is important to identify what is the purpose of the twitter account within the broader communication portfolio; what audiences it reaches, with what intent etc. @ILRI Twitter currently has a Klout score of [41](#),

stating that the account 'generates a steady flow of actions and discussions'. This is a fairly high score and the levels of RTs have been steadily growing from around 12 per day in early January to 40 or so per day in mid February.

Facebook page: The ILRI Facebook page content is generated through automated feeds from the blogs. Sometimes this means that some of the posts are sometimes duplicated in the newsfeed – this may be regarded as annoying by fans. Content is very frequent (3-4 posts every couple of days) and the site features and on-markets ILRI's other social media sites (tabs for Twitter, Flickr and SlideShare) which is good practice¹¹. So far, it seems that engagement and interaction is slowly building on this platform and so to bring it to the forefront of the other platforms they use (i.e. the various blogs and websites) would make it even more useful and beneficial. Managing the feed to make sure the content is all 'unique' would also reflect better on the value of the content being shared.

2.4 FACE-TO-FACE ENGAGEMENT.

Both the Nairobi and Addis Ababa campuses are reputational assets for the organisation. They enable different stakeholder groups to be convened and for conversations to be hosted and 'socially reported' by KMIS teams. The Ethiopia campus in particular facilitated more than 32,000 'walk-in' visitors and 28,000 internet café users during 2010 (not known if Kenya campus captures similar data). Each individual event is an opportunity to raise awareness and deepen knowledge about the work of ILRI to an individual who is a potential ally/partner/advocate, and to consolidate ILRI's reputation. Criteria should be set to maximise the potential of such visitors 'adding value' to ILRI's work e.g. by prioritising those from key stakeholder groups, advocacy targets, the media etc. ILRI Addis hosted 137 events during 2010 and has the potential to do more.

2.5 USING THE MEDIA

ILRI has employed the services of Burness Communication, a global media management agency with offices in Nairobi and Washington, to handle its media work since 2007 at a cost of around US\$80,000 per year. They have developed and implemented 15 media campaigns in this time, placing around 250 stories as well as a range of Op-Eds, Letters to the Editor and other media pieces to influential publications on behalf of ILRI. Eighty two interviews with ILRI spokespeople were facilitated across a range of target media. Burness produce robust monitoring of these campaigns, and closely track uptake through a media monitoring service which allows ILRI to see where they are being heard. The organisation claim to have reached around 200m through this media coverage, raising the profile of ILRI's work across four main issue areas. 53% of the total coverage was gained in 'donor countries'; 28% in developing countries and 17% in the trade press.

Outsourcing media work has many advantages, including provision of up-to-the-minute media intelligence, robust M+E and media analysis, competent writing skills on tap, facilitation of interviews in countries where ILRI has no capacity of its own, press release and broadcast skills etc. But in practice, the outsourcing is not resource-free: tremendous effort is spent identifying suitable issues for media attention, crafting and re-writing and approving press releases and media interviews, facilitating ILRI spokespersons and approving media approaches etc. Burness Communication is extremely good at what they do, but ILRI needs to be pragmatic about the dependency this creates on the agency for the future: they hold the key media relationships and are the intermediaries standing between ILRI and the media's key influentials. It would be worth considering keeping them on for 'big ticket' items (2-3 per year) and using the rest of the money to pay for strong writers who know the organisation (internal/external?) and can write the stories that experience tells you the media want to hear?

3. COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY IN ORDER TO BE INFLUENTIAL

The ILRI Interim Strategy 2011-2012 identifies the challenge of 'a crowded field of providers of knowledge, technology, and capacity development', which requires that ILRI is clear about what is the unique brand of knowledge and services it can deliver in the field of science 'at the intersect of poverty and livestock'. Purposeful and strategic communication around issues that ILRI has the reputation to speak about, and that resonate with current – and emerging – debates, is the key to being heard and advancing the position and potential of livestock farmers globally.

3.1 CORPORATE IDENTITY, IMAGE, REPUTATION AND INFLUENCE

Corporate Identity is what you project to the outside world through a range of different instruments e.g. your mission, people, issues, information to the outside world. The organisational brand and visuals are the most visible element of a corporate identity, but identity also embraces the organisation's 'look and feel', its tone of voice and the brand core values and beliefs that should be communicated throughout the organisation, from the way it treats its staff (and asks them to present themselves and their organisation, to the world) and manages partnerships, to the core messages that are communicated across the world. An organisation has control over the identity it creates and presents to the world: it does not have control over the *image* that people create of that organisation.

The organisation's **image** is the immediate impression people create for themselves when they come across a signal or message emanating from your institution. It is shaped by what people **know** first hand (e.g. from materials seen, speeches heard, and discussions they have already had about your organisation); what they know **from others** i.e. third hand impressions shared; and **what is their direct experience** of the organisation and its work.

Your **reputation** is created through the collective representation of past images of your organisation which have been established over time, either through communication or past experiences¹². Reputation is enduring: difficult to build and easy to destroy. Institutional reputation is based on the simple idea that 'favourable images and reputations are precursors to sets of actions and behaviour of individuals and publics favourable to an institution'¹³.

There is a close connection between building and maintaining an organisational brand and corporate reputation on the one hand, and informing and influencing policy and practitioner debates with evidence on the other. Many of the communication principles and tactics that deliver desired objectives are common to both, including the mainstreaming of explicit and intentional communication into research methodologies. Guidance on what emphasis should be placed on what kinds of communication activities can be found within the body of evidence on research-policy linkages.

IDRC's thinking on what makes research policy-influential

IDRC, following many years of support to the research community to increase its impact on development policy, identify the following preconditions for policy influence¹⁴:

- **Intent:** Researchers must want to communicate their research
- **Direct engagement** with (in this case) the policy community. This means more than communicating information; rather, it means forming relationships with policy-makers that can endure over many years.
- **Public Participation:** "To have real and lasting influence on policy (in this case), members of the research community must become participants in democratic governance, active at every level, from community deliberation and decision making to national and international policy-making."

DFID's thinking on what maximises the chances of research uptake

The Department for International Development (DFID), after five years of encouraging the mainstreaming of strategic communication within Global Public Goods research funded through its Research Programme Consortia¹⁵ identified a series of 'best practice approaches' which included engaging different stakeholders early on; finding the human story within your research; keeping the message simple; working with different forms of media; being creative in the way you show your data; recognising reluctant researchers; using information intermediaries; and piggybacking newsworthy events¹⁶.

ILRI's Guiding Principles for achieving impact through policy change¹⁷

ILRI's own analysis of the factors contributing to policy impact, based on a review of four of its own research programmes using the RAPID framework, identified a series of guiding principles for influencing policy change. **Related to political context**, it concluded that effective engagement in the policy process requires a good understanding of the political context, so appropriate strategies can be utilised; linking activities and evidence to ongoing and/or high-profile political strategies can be an effective way to get a new policy

narrative on the agenda; building credibility and being a regular and constructive part of policy dialogues can help organisations stimulate demand for them to be part of a process; and grassroots pressure from voters and stakeholders can be hugely important in policy processes.

Related to relevance of evidence, the guidelines suggested there is need to understand the real policy needs that can be addressed through research before and during the research activity; that evidence is most relevant when it forms a complete picture and it need to be the appropriate 'type' for the situation. The Guidelines recommended that the credibility of the organisation providing evidence may need building up over time with relevant policy process actors; and that they need to take advantage of the relative credibility of their research (compared, for example with anecdotal evidence of CSOs and NGOs). Communication is critically important, not only to decision-makers, but to whatever range of actors may play some influencing role. Having understood the actors in the policy process from early analysis, there should be specific efforts to communicate with each of the key stakeholder groups, and linkages should be made from the beginning of the research process.

Related to the **importance of linkages** if policy influencing is an objective, research organisations need to understand who are the relevant actors in the policy process, both in terms of targets and strategic partners to work with in influencing; rewards can come from linkages between civil society and research organisations; building and maintaining linkages requires time, resources and skills; and that time and money spent in this area is money well spent. Lastly, personal relationships can be hugely important in making effective linkages, but time and effort should be made to ensure that these are also reflected in institutional ownership.

3.2 PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

3.2.1 ALIGNING COMMUNICATION STRATEGY TO ORGANISATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Communication activities, if they are to effectively bring about research and organisational objectives, need to be purposeful, planned, adequately resourced, and explicitly aligned to the organisation's overall mission. In an environment of diminishing resources, every organisation's strategies and plans - including those related to communication - need to be effective in their employment of financial and human resources. This means both planning and evaluating communications activities within a clear framework of delivering results for research outcomes, uptake and organisational mission, and making sure that processes support this connection. Both internal and external communication is important to delivering these results, and the role of each kind should be spelled out within a broad strategy¹⁸. Both management commitment to, and staff ownership over the organisation's communication work is essential for achieving the organisation's broader goals. The role of partners and effective partnerships in delivering both research and development outcomes, and in building reputation and helping ILRI to be influential, cannot be overstated. Partners should not be considered as 'the competition' (even if they are providing similar services and research capabilities) and ILRI should 'walk and talk' collaboration if it is to be more influential.

3.2.2 SYSTEMATISED PROCESSES FOR COMMUNICATING RESEARCH

There can be no quality external communication without the systems and processes in place to generate, capture, process and communicate the knowledge arising out of the programmes and projects.

Knowledge management measures put in place as a result of a strategic overview (2009) have addressed many of the problems identified in the report. There appears to be an active and enthusiastic informal engagement between KMIS staff and the ILRI scientists – particularly on the Addis campus - to both encourage them to adopt the new 'better comms' working practices such as Yammer, and blogging and to build their skills to be more effective communicators. The improved data and knowledge management processes and systems introduced by KMIS team have produced:

- Greater confidence and capacity within programmes and projects to communicate project information through blogs (see Annex C1: Blogs for analysis of each blog)
- More 'real time' information about the research programmes and their results through blogs
- Better internal communication, through yammer, that has started to connect people both within and between the two institutional sites and begun the process of identifying upcoming events, ongoing

issues (both related to research work and the broader work environment) and made important connections between the suppliers of information and those charged with communicating it (wherever they sit in the institutions)

There needs to be a balance between generating lots of content, which is regarded by a minority of staff as 'too much', 'too noisy', and 'not strategic for the organisation as a whole', and spending increased resources on old-fashioned editorial processes which generates less numerous, more expensive information products that can be better crafted for specific audiences. This is a not unhealthy tension which exists in most organisations, and there is room at ILRI for both camps because, increasingly, this solves the problem of satisfying a disparate set of priority audiences who want different kinds of information at different points in time, that satisfy their information needs in a more tailored way.

I heard implicit demand from research themes (made explicit during the interviews) for ILRI's central communications department to offer 'a handful of Peters'...people who could be drawn into the programme and project planning processes to help them to develop strategic communication and engagement through the life of the projects: "To help us to work through the communication elements that turn research outputs and outcomes into development outcomes". Some of these people recognised the need to pay for these services and could resource them and many stressed the need for someone who 'understands content' as well as communications to realise potential.

There are mixed views about whether the 'embedded' communications people had delivered the desired results within programmes. Reasons varied from inadequate skills, to ill-defined TORs, to impractical mixture of admin and strategic communication and information work in one job description. There exists recognition that this model **could** work with following 'enabling environment' conditions:

- Skills appropriate to the job they're being asked to do (could be supported by KMIS team);
- Informal but systematised links between programme communications staff and central communications personnel, e.g. shared planning, attendance at retreats and annual planning meetings etc.;
- Clearly defined balance between programme-specific communications work and drawing down on the specialised activities of central communication staff (e.g. for publications, events planning, social reporting etc.);
- Less emphasis on the need for the person to be an 'international staff member' and more attention given to the skills and capabilities of staff who are in place and how to realise their potential.

3.2.3 TAPPING INTO EXTERNAL NARRATIVES AND USING INFLUENTIAL INFORMANTS

Communication-savvy organisations share the defining feature of identifying external narratives – either current or spotting those 'on the horizon' – and finding their own narratives which speak to these issues¹⁹. These external narratives are broadly set by three kinds of agenda-setting: the media agenda, the policy agenda and the public agenda: all three are inter-related and each one provides a useful entry point to the other²⁰. Any organisation involved in agenda-setting needs to do more than simply make information available and hope that it is noticed. It needs to be explicit and intentional about where, how and what information is communicated to whom, and – when this becomes a complex and busy landscape – the organisation needs to prioritise in a way that best meets its organisational objectives and mission. The agenda-setting process is not the result of receiving one or a few messages, but is due to the aggregate impact of a very large number of messages, each of which has a different content but all of which deal with the same general issue.

There is a strong feeling that ILRI has 'missed the boat' and/or 'failed to make themselves heard clearly' on some prominent visible issues to date such as Avian Flu, although there are also some clear issues on which people feel ILRI has 'added value' and nuanced the debate e.g. around the Dairy Sector. External influentials spoke of the organisation 'pushing arguments that are little more than milk and apple pie' (i.e. obviously wholesome, but not compelling) rather than providing robust livestock-based solutions to other people's development problems and challenges. There are important and emerging debates to which ILRI could contribute/lead such as the growing interest of Africa's middle classes in nutrition and health; climate

change adaptation strategies; increasing role of the private sector in delivering aid etc. Individual scientists do think strategically about these issues, but the organisation needs to find ways to do this institutionally to in order to ‘ride – and sometimes be ahead of – the wave of new thinking’.

There is tension between communicating science and advocacy, particularly for ILRI’s scientists who believe that getting involved in influencing policymakers or taking a particular stand on any issue (besides pro-poor development around livestock options) questions their objectivity as scientists and compromises the position of the institution in the future. It is possible to take a position that achieves both if ILRI positions itself as *the organisation which seeks to shift the terms of the debate*, for example to contribute in a way that ensures:

- All external debates consider the evidence on all sides of the argument before drawing conclusions (and ILRI is positioned to both *explain and interpret* the evidence on both sides);
- The debate makes explicit the enhanced role for smallholder farmers and livestock options in the debate and looks to southern solutions based on researched experience (and ILRI can provide both its own and others’ research and access to smallholder experiences);
- The debate is fed with southern perspectives as articulated by research and development organisations that represent southern communities (and ILRI can convene such representation)

Engaging with opinion leaders and ‘key influentials’ is essential to achieving ILRI’s influence objectives. Opinion leaders have three important characteristics²¹. They are very knowledgeable in the sphere in which they exert opinion leadership, they are well connected socially, and they are effective at presenting their ample knowledge to their numerous contacts. ILRI has successfully made use of a number of these key influentials who act as ‘intermediaries’ between the organisation and the media (e.g. Edinburgh scientist speaking on Climate Change topics), but this is opportunistic rather than strategic. There is need to be more explicit about who are the key influentials in the key debates that ILRI wants to have influence over, and what are the information sources (both research content as well as personnel) that could deliver valuable source materials for each one.

3.2.4 EXPLOITING THE FULL POTENTIAL OF TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION PLATFORMS

There are two sets of reasons why an organisation like ILRI should have both systemic and systematised (perhaps informal) ways of communicating with their different stakeholders: both assume that the channels facilitating communication transfer information and knowledge ‘both ways’ i.e. *from* ILRI and *to* ILRI. The first is to listen to, capture and understand the information and knowledge needs of their audiences in order to capture and reflect these concerns in ILRI’s research agenda. The second is to share what they have learned from their research and to engender a conversation around the relevance, application and uptake of the knowledge. Both kinds of communication practices are necessary to effectively bring about positive development outcomes with public goods research.

The growing body of knowledge around evidence-based policy and influencing development processes, suggests that engagement, partnerships and informed conversations are the smartest kinds of interventions. This means engaging in *other people’s conversations* as well as producing compelling arguments in your own communication neighbourhoods.

3.2.5 MAKING YOURSELF USEFUL AND NECESSARY TO THE MEDIA

The media agenda is not set by what is important, and the media are not interested in an institution like ILRI (“Africa is a hard sell, agriculture is a hard sell within that, and livestock within agriculture is a niche market”, says Fred Pearce, ex News Editor, New Scientist and author). But the media **are** massively interested in what ordinary people care about; they are influenced by what politicians and ‘important and influential’ people think and say; and they like interesting, quirky, shocking and cutting edge stories on just about anything. They are also loyal to the sources of reliable, informative, newsworthy information that help them to progress their careers. ILRI should set itself media objectives as follows:

- to become the 'Go To Place' for x,y,z topics which have media relevance and resonance (review topics annually)
- To be for (selected) journalists, the 'critical friend' who will explain and interpret current issues and give them deep background on stories to help them be better journalists and write better stories;
- To help (selected) journalists to interpret, contextualise and extrapolate topical stories (without patronising them)
- To be a source of new ideas and innovations that are pegged to narratives and storylines/agendas that the media is currently fascinated by (this will change weekly)
- to develop a set of key capacities, messages and spectrum of authoritative spokespersons who can become the 'reference points' for the media on these issues
- To be a broker to other useful organisations, specialists and people they should talk to (Girl Guide principle that if you help others, they will in turn help you back)
- Set clear boundaries for what media you should invest time in nurturing, for what purpose, with what indicators of success.

4 CHALLENGES TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

4.1 STAFF RUNNING TOO FAST TO BE STRATEGIC ABOUT COMMUNICATING

Most of the scientific staff are too busy on multiple projects to engage at sufficient depth either with the issues that need tackling/understanding, or with the partners that they are working with (some of whom are key influentials and powerful in any external communication strategy). At best, they perform 'least worst' simple analysis of problems and the solutions that are required to overcome them: this doesn't make for best quality science

Related to the above, there is no time for staff to reflect on the 'so what?' of projects that would give rise to interesting analysis and – importantly – reflections on dominant public narratives and rebuttals of those that are just plain wrong. ILRI scientists don't have time to engage with latest scientific literature: if this is the case, are they aware of and able to respond with their research to current narratives and emerging thinking?

4.2 INCENTIVES FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

Resource allocation competition: investment in communication is seen as 'taking away' research monies. Researchers (not just in ILRI) are not convinced that this investment will help to achieve better research and development outcomes, and therefore do not want to commit time and resources to it. The successes of smart communication working practices (e.g. higher media profile, greater visibility of issues emerging, more demand for participation in external events and conferences) are starting to emerge: this evidence should be used to promote others to follow suit.

Institutional incentives for academic publishing are far more important than incentives for either good partnerships/effective research brokers or communication and engagement with diverse sets of stakeholders. Many researchers are in ILRI as part of a career progression which requires that they respond to the drivers of a conventional academic career over and above doing 'good research that delivers development outcomes'.

The recent review of partnerships concluded that the organisation has allowed a proliferation of ad-hoc approaches to partnerships to flourish; has not addressed the lack of 'soft skills' required to ably manage different kinds of partnerships, and as a result has enabled a small set of strategic partnerships to become dangerously weakened²². Within this context, communication and influencing work is difficult.

4.3 ACTIVE DISINCENTIVES EXIST FOR STAFF TO BE EFFECTIVE AMBASSADORS

There is not enough clarity of purpose or strategy that would explain to ILRI staff what are the organisation's priorities for external communication. This absence allows staff to interpret the mission differentially (e.g. some see its role to communicate with other CG centres and not civil society; others see its mandate to communicate exclusively with the academic community; others to global policymakers). Clearer articulation and explanation of its target audiences and communication purpose, and uptake pathway/theory of change in which this fits the organisation's broader mission, would help.

The organisation is complex, with many different research agendas and projects. Staff are busy and don't have sufficient overview to be effective ambassadors. Not all staff feel that they are valued members of the organisation and its mission ("ILRI very hierarchical"; "conservative with a small 'c' in a way that stifles innovation and doesn't allow us to be as good as we could be"; "we're not made to feel an essential part of an organisation that's doing great things – and most of the time we don't know what those great things are". An organisation's human resources are amongst its greatest assets – small practical measures as well as bigger human resource issues (of which the organisation is aware and working on, e.g. incentive/bonus scheme; systematising regular staff reviews etc.) are an essential part of making every person within ILRI able and willing to speak informatively and positively about the work of the organisation to the outside world.

4.4 WHAT IS THE ORGANISATION'S MANDATE ANYWAY?

ILRI has a reputation for reliable and robust science but, apart from work at the BECA Hub, it is not regarded as a brand leader in cutting edge science around. But nor is it regarded as a centre that articulates and pioneers research that meets the explicit needs of the poorest livestock owners ('where is the research on camels?' 'What are the mechanisms for poor people to identify the research agenda?'). There is not insignificant push for the centre to enable and support more innovative research that doesn't necessarily 'fit' with the prevailing research areas which are largely commissioned by donors and reflect the prevailing norms in global public goods research ("Why are we going along with the World Bank export-led market thinking when we know this isn't sustainable?"). But no-one is sure how to fund such work.

The centre is applauded for its contribution to debates around livestock as a commodity, as well as livestock in broader natural resource management debates. For some, the challenge laying before ILRI is in finding a way to bring together the separate communities that convene around these two debates. One expert²³ called ILRI 'the global focal point for livestock issues' and said it had 'a responsibility to mainstream this thinking in broader agricultural and development debates'.

There are opportunities, in the 'transition year' as the new CG develops mechanisms and programmes of work, for ILRI to articulate and showcase the 'offer' that it makes to different kinds of stakeholders (e.g. practical solutions for livestock owners; economic advancements for commercial farmers; policy solutions etc.) with different kinds of research (participative action-research; systems research; blue-sky research etc.). This will help positioning within new CG and with existing partnerships that will need to be maintained outside of the new CRPs.

4.5 MASSIVE UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE FUTURE

The commoditisation of knowledge and collaboration across CG will make knowledge sharing and cross-programme analysis and 'so what?' discussions more difficult. At the same time, CG Reform brings uncertainty for ILRI brand and positioning within CG/CRPs. There is not yet clarity about what will be the requirement for communicating the new research programmes and the role of each contributing CG centre within this, nor how this aspect will be funded. The potential to influence these decisions is not helped by the fact that there is 'no-one to talk to about communications' at a higher level in the new CG Secretariat. Recent commitment to communication expressed in the Strategy and Results Framework is worryingly vague²⁴.

The reform process brings both challenges and opportunities. Potentially, the shift away from research on single commodities and individual centres will generate research knowledge that has greater resonance with issues that have currency with ordinary people²⁵. However the shift to multi-centre research carries the risk that the ILRI brand will be lost in the communication of broader issues, and the more aggressive positioning of the larger and louder CG centres. In addition, there is a feeling among some professionals both in and out of the system, that the self-absorption required by the reform process has taken the CG 'eye off the ball' and it could be a risk that the CRPs will – by the time they become operational – generate research that answers 'last year's questions'.

At the same time, increased donor focus on SROs as a way of reaching into and strengthening national agricultural systems has brought its own risks. The multistakeholder platforms that used to be convened – which provided many CG centres with convenient mechanisms for outreach – were abandoned by the SROs, leaving CG centres at the risk of being further alienated. Hagmann's recent review of partnerships, which concluded that work needs to be done in this area, exacerbates this risk of 'ILRI working on its own'.

4.6 GLOBAL INFLUENCE VS EAST AFRICA PRESENCE.

ILRI's Global Public Goods research is intended to reach beyond the countries in which it has a physical presence, but there are challenges of both time and space. In the first instance, GPG research does not provide ready-made solutions to current problems because research often takes years to conduct, the results are not intended in their raw state to give ready-made solutions to policymakers' problems, or quick-fix answers to the media. But there are answers within the research that absolutely pertain to both these kinds of people's needs: it needs repackaging and repurposing to become useful. CG's own AAA guidelines provide useful counsel in this area.

For the second problem of irrelevance of GPG research to specific geographical locations, it is inevitable that ILRI's levels of engagement and influence will be highest in Ethiopia and Kenya: webstats confirm these are the places of highest traffic (39% of all page views during 2010 from East Africa vs next biggest USA 13%), and engagement activities are concentrated in national agencies and East Africa based offices of international organisations e.g. FAO and bilateral agencies e.g. DFID. The refreshed ILRI website does a good job of tagging content to 'pull in' relevant content to the regions, but this 'global lens' needs also to run through ILRI visuals, photos, print materials, calendar etc. so that regional representatives and researchers working outside of East Africa have appropriate literature to start a conversation with important stakeholders. The organisation doesn't have a policy or strategy to address translating their materials, and this results in a very small proportion of materials suitable for non native-english speakers. A policy doesn't need to be very complex, sophisticated or expensive to be useful as a statement of intent and practical guide for research teams.

4.7 COMMUNICATIONS TEAM STRUCTURE

The split-site divide of communication staff working on the same deliverable is not perfect. It is confusing for staff to know who to approach, and for what purpose – although more could be done to clarify who does what, with what examples, for what purpose and to market this capacity and these people to staff on both campuses. Initiatives to make Addis staff more 'visible' – to get out of their offices more and talking to researchers – is successful in creating more 'intelligent customers' within the organisation. There are massive bottlenecks at the Susan/Peter level, with too much demand for them to realise (even with their very long working days). This could be overcome in the short-term by delegating more tasks to their teams where skills and capacity is available, and by beefing up strategic communication capacity within research teams (see recommendations).

Joint planning, resourcing and delivery of communication outputs by a central cadre of communication specialists (as opposed to members of PA in Kenya and KMIS in Ethiopia) is the way many organisations

deliver a similarly complex range of products and services, with visible middle-level managers providing direction, quality assurance and day-to-day delivery. This requires a change of mindset amongst staff (both inside and outside of PA and KMIS) to engage at a 'lower down level' than the managers of the two units.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 BE MORE PURPOSEFUL IN COMMUNICATIONS CHOICES

1. Make clear the organisation's commitment to communicating its message externally at the highest level of Management; ensure the agenda has a 'champion' at Board level and expand the Advisory Board to include research uptake and communications expertise.
2. Building on the Outcome Mapping planning processes used by each of the Research Themes, develop for the organisation as a whole, a Theory of Change which describes uptake pathways for research evidence and external communication messages. This broad framework should be broad enough for staff to see their work within it; and detailed enough for external communication staff to develop criteria to inform their work choices and to develop communication plans within it.
3. Take seriously the recommendations of the recent review of partnerships, and seek to create and exploit reputational capital by building and maintaining healthy partnerships.
4. Develop standard metrics which are generated, reported to the board and discussed systematically against declared influence objectives with key target audiences, in order to improve both performance and organisational approaches, and to encourage reflective learning.
5. There should be one document which describes the overarching Strategic Communication and Engagement strategy of ILRI, showing how each of the functional areas delivers to the overall goals e.g. Publishing Strategy; Partnership, Media engagement, Knowledge Management, Strategic Communications (within research programmes), and how the Strategy delivers to the organisation's mission and business objectives.
6. Recognise that there are no perfectly neat dividing lines between the work of the KMIS department (whose social media and website work fulfil corporate, reputation-building and public affairs functions) and the current Public Affairs department (whose work inevitably generates and furthers knowledge management functions) and consider internal re-organisation to make the department's central functions and services clearer to staff. Continue the trend towards the closer planning and working arrangements of staff within KMIS, Public Affairs, and embedded communications personnel within research teams, and work with research teams to make them more 'intelligent customers' of central communication and knowledge management services.
7. Make a distinction between and plan for the communication of ILRI as an organisation building its reputation, track record of research, corporate capabilities; and ILRI's set of core issues and competencies; enabling/facilitating services; and 'authority to speak' on topics that fit with new CG ways of working across institutions.
8. Consider removing the artificial structural divides between PA and KMIS and re-grouping around functional clusters that deliver results. Encourage/require research themes to invest in communication capacity that relates to central communications department in 'matrix management' structures. Talk to ODI, IIED, Practical Action about experiences with this model.

Choosing target audiences

9. Prioritise who are the organisation's key audiences and in each case identify what you want them to KNOW about ILRI and its work; what you want them to THINK about you; and what is the BEHAVIOUR you want them to display towards you. This list should be co-created by theme leaders and the management and should include opinion leaders and key informants.
10. It might help to analyse the policies (statements and monetary flows) of key decisionmakers around the relevant issues on which ILRI has a position/research and to identify what are the KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES you want these agencies to have as a result of ILRI engaging with them.

11. Create a baseline and track these indicators annually. Ensure that project/programme research and partnerships, and external communication campaigns deliver messages and develop relationships in support of these ambitions.
12. Be explicit about ILRI's responsibility and mandate to communicate beyond science community and immediate 'other stakeholder' partners
13. Use definitions of target audiences to inform what public events ILRI chooses to be present at (both actively looking for invitations as well as responding to invitations from x,y,z organisations and events); which visitors and groups it chooses to 'show around the campus'; what materials it produces outside of specific research areas.
14. Actively promote appropriate content to these audiences: remember that people are busy and policymakers in particular are burdened with information overload so they only want content that is relevant and helpful to them.

Choosing messages/themes

15. Identify key issues and messages that emerge from ILRI's work **and** resonate with concerns and interests of your key stakeholders, and orchestrate ILRI communication around them on an annual basis. This would enable the External Communications staff to prioritise and plan their work more strategically, and be less 'demand driven' in their work (i.e. not having to respond to every single request from the media, for talks, for visits by outsiders etc.)
16. "People are confused about the role of livestock" (John McDermott, speaking at the Management Meeting February x). ILRI needs to be cleverer at articulating 'for the confused' the role and potential of livestock for the poor; and in producing compelling arguments 'for the sceptical' the value-added of livestock to reducing poverty/adapting to climate change/contributing to growth. You need to identify what are preconceptions in key audiences and address them directly.
17. Capitalise on the diversity of approaches and spread of research conducted by ILRI. BeCA Hub 'high end science' sitting alongside participative action research is a reputational asset (and will speak eloquently to different audiences) so long as you are clear about what each delivers to your overall mission.

Using intermediaries and influentials

18. Engage actively in other people's conversations: take on the adversaries and get immersed in the evidence-based policy arguments using the reputation ILRI has developed for robust, safe, objective research on the role of livestock in both agriculture and broader development issues. This could include identifying and participating in one specific debate, as a pilot, and using social media to make ILRI arguments more visible and the 'ILRI brand' more recognised as 'the place to go for evidenced perspectives on livestock issues in development'.
19. Make more of what others are saying about ILRI: third party validation of the organisation's work is much more powerful than you telling others how great you are/what you do (see 'ILRI in the News' section)
20. Recognise that in the new CG, other centres will be – as well as collaborators – key intermediaries and influentials who will need to be convinced of the 'value-added' of a livestock approach to bringing development solutions. Mainstreaming livestock within CRPs could be a powerful tactical approach: if other CG centres are willing to see livestock as the solution to their e.g. productivity, biodiversity, adaptation challenges, they will do the advocacy and policy influencing themselves.

5.2 PRODUCE MORE SYNTHESSES AROUND TOPICAL DEBATES

21. Build an external profile that is less based on how good and important livestock are to poor people, and more based around how livestock options provide tangible (i.e. costed and fully articulated) solutions to the problems of other agricultural and development approaches. E.g. develop messages that provide evidence of how livestock integration can solve some of the problems of the 'big hitters' (e.g. the 'testosterone-driven commodity centres) and can be practically taken up and communicated by the powerful advocacy movements (e.g. gender movement about the contribution of livestock to the empowerment and financial independence of women etc.)

22. Capitalise on ILRI's longevity in the field and speak to current fashion for 'systematic evidence'²⁶ by commissioning syntheses of past work and collation of 'state of the art' research on topics on which you have track record (convene cross-departmental teams around chosen external narratives to identify past and present ILRI research that contributes knowledge to chosen external debates). Craft key messages from existing research, and identify evidence that is 'missing' from these debates around the contribution of livestock. Commission this knowledge output through ongoing research and use as advocacy material in 2-3 key external debates per year (as prioritised by ILRI)
23. Capture and publish on ILRI website the half dozen 'big issue' arguments that the organisation is leading on every year. This should be prominent static content, and be supported by any dynamic content that is generated throughout the year to refresh and update the arguments.
24. Consider strategic collaboration with distance learning and education organisations who need practical, relevant, evidence-based syllabus content, and who can reach potentially vast audiences that ILRI could never penetrate on their own. Added advantage of content being re-purposed and re-packaged by experts for that market.

5.3 FINETUNE COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

25. Establish SMART communications practices within programmes to make communication and engagement 'explicit and intentional' and set targets and concrete ambitions – pilot and showcase through new CRP 3.7 and track effectiveness to show other programmes²⁷.
26. Require all new research programmes (including those falling outside of CRPs) to be explicit and intentional about their communication, engagement and partnerships ambitions; make this part of quality assurance process for sign-off and nominate responsibility for this at Board level.
27. Ensure that all social media platforms have a clear role within the overall ILRI Communication Strategy; are 'joined up' and on-market other ILRI information and communication platforms wherever appropriate; and are known about and used by all ILRI staff with a communications function. Make sure that the analysis of 'reach and engagement' of these platforms are regularly communicated to senior management in a way that keeps them informed about what issues are of interest to the outside world, and how ILRI is engaging with them.
28. Internal information systems oriented so that communications can underpin and support ILRI work e.g. Resource Mobilisation, Partnership Strategy, CRP Policy Engagement etc.

5.4 PROFESSIONALISE AND BUILD CADRE OF COMMUNICATION STAFF

29. Develop a professional cadre of communication staff across the organisation, with sets of 'core capabilities and skills' that relate clearly to function that apply to both central communication staff (i.e. in Public Affairs and Knowledge and Information departments) and within programmes ('embedded' staff within each thematic area). Create incentives and processes that encourage peer working across different departments in ways that clearly deliver better quality outputs (so that line managers will have a reason to enable and encourage this to happen).
30. Consider secondments for comms staff within other CG centres or 'reciprocal upskilling opportunities' with comms specialist organisations in other countries²⁸

5.5 MAKE IT EASIER FOR ILRI STAFF TO COMMUNICATE THE ORGANISATION

31. Help ILRI staff who are not 'front of house' presenters but are still ambassadors for the organisation, to be kept informed about the achievements and key issues being addressed by ILRI's ongoing work. If you make staff feel they are part of something great, they will spread the word to their own personal and professional networks. Consider a Notice Board, monthly 'Brown Bag Lunches', video shows of recent films made about ILRI's work (or media footage generated) that actively communicate up-to-date information about what ILRI is saying to the world and what the world is saying about ILRI²⁹. Produce one-page 'ILRI in the world' overviews for staff: these could be included on the proposed media page on website as an 'At a Glance' resource for journalists.
32. Create the space (informal working group? Inclusion in eachothers' planning meetings? Etc.) for those responsible for external communication³⁰ to share intelligence on what are the 'supply side messages'

emerging from ILRI's work e.g. what research findings emerging/conferences /workshops convened/issue emerging and what is the nature of demand from ILRI's key target audiences e.g. what are emerging narratives/questions/challenges of donors, policymakers, influentials, media etc. that might help these staff 'matchmake' ILRI's information with the what the outside world wants to know.

33. Create a professional powerpoint presentation that all staff can use as add-on to their own technical presentations, describing briefly the mission and mandate and headline achievements of ILRI in an engaging way. Develop clear corporate identity guidelines for presentations which to ensure that any external presentation provides a consistent set of messages and look and feel. Make templates easily available on ILRI intranet. Make core powerpoints on technical aspects of work available for partners to help them make the case for livestock to their constituencies.
34. Develop a Translation Strategy. This doesn't need to be very complicated, but it does need to be explicit about the organisation's line on translation and set aside funding to enable regional offices to have at least the basic ILRI information translated into local languages. The strategy should clearly state how provision for local language and appropriate communication will be factored into the new CRPs ways of working.

5.6 MAKE IT EASIER FOR ALL KINDS OF MEDIA TO FIND AND REPORT ILRI'S WORK

35. Make it easier for the media to find you and your spokespersons on key issues. Specific practical measures include:
 - 'ILRI in the News' section on website to connect to current press coverage on external sites about ILRI (feed news coverage to home page) because this reinforces reputational messages and brand and makes other media outlets likely to rework existing stories.
 - News databases should include 'benign media' such as IRIN news www.irinnews.org and Interpress Service www.ips.org and the UK Guardian newspaper's who are always looking for multimedia outputs related to development themes
 - Media scan of coverage received over 12 month period with rolling trends analysed (could be work of an intern – possible tie-up with University College Falmouth Journalism Faculty??) looking at WHAT topics were covered in response to WHAT INPUT (e.g. conference, scientific paper, press release) IN WHAT MEDIA (print, radio, tv what editions) reaching WHAT AUDIENCES. Try to spot trends and report to management team/theme leaders (?) quarterly to identify what is in demand and present coverage plotted against desired audience reach and desired message delivery
36. Make more systematic use of the existing information services, networks and channels that exist to bring agricultural and sustainable development information to different user groups. The open access initiatives, and web2.0 tactics already in place are a good way to let people find your information, but there are additional infomediaries that could on-market ILRI materials who currently do not
37. Join in other people's debates (particularly the ones that resonate with your key issue areas). Feed the conversations around these debates onto the ILRI website and other social media platforms to show that the organisation is central to these external narratives. Highlight (and feed onto the new Media page) particularly any that pick up and reflect ILRI research and debate.
38. Consider sponsoring a high profile ILRI award that would capture media attention e.g. journalist best captures voices of livestock farmers/issues/challenges. Incentives include raising profile of journalists; bringing attention to media coverage of this issue; etc.
39. Show and Tell results/impact more aggressively where it counts
 - Develop an 'impact' page on the website which pulls together the evidence of the impact of ILRI research over the years – see ICRAF page

5.7 MAKING BETTER USE OF MONITORING INFORMATION

40. Track citations of key publications to see where they are being picked up and used. This is a good indicator of both what audiences ILRI is reaching, and what issues are of interest to the outside world.
41. There is plenty of data collected on what is the supply and demand for ILRI information (see Annex D showing Mahider outputs, webstats of use, media reports etc.). This should be summarised and

discussed as a formal item at each Management Meeting so that senior management have 'real time' information about what is the profile and what are the issues ILRI is presenting to the world (supply), and what the world is interested in (demand). Share these with all staff so that they are part of the conversation.

¹ Analysis of ILRI audio-visual materials in Annex C5: Audio-visual

² Analysis of ILRI YouTube in Annex C6: YouTube

³ Analysis of ILRI BlipTV in Annex C7: YouTube

⁴ Analysis of ILRI podcasts in Annex C8: Podcasts

⁵ Analysis of ILRI photographs in Annex C4:Photos

⁶ Interview Peter Ballantyne ILRI Ethiopia campus February 19th 2011

⁷ KMIS report on 2010, January 24th 2011

⁸ From KMIS January report for Megan 2011

⁹ Analysis of twitter account in Annex C2:Twitter

¹⁰ <http://www.chrisbrogan.com/tweet-analysis/>

¹¹ <http://www.johnhaydon.com/about>

¹² Grunig, J.E. (1993) *Image and substance: from symbolic to behavioral relationships*, *Public Relations Review* **19**(2), 121–139

¹³ *Measuring Reputation: Perspectives, Problems and Prospects* JOEP CORNELISSEN, University of Amsterdam RICHARD THORPE, Manchester Metropolitan University *European Management Journal* Vol. 20, No. 2, pp. 172–178, April 2002

¹⁴ Cited in Scoping study for DFID 'Monitoring and Evaluation of Research Communications', by Catherine Butcher and Gil Yaron August 2006 http://www.dfid.gov.uk/r4d/pdf/ThematicSummaries/scoping_study_monitoring_and_evaluation.pdf

¹⁵ RPCs, under the DFID Research Framework 2005, were required to develop a Communication Strategy using Guidelines http://www.research4development.info/PDF/Publications/GuidanceNote_Communications.pdf; spend a minimum of 10% of overall research funds on communication and engagement; and nominate a Communication Officer to oversee activities throughout the research cycle.

¹⁶ CommsConsult presentation to ILRI Management meeting published as Annex A

¹⁷ The principles were drawn up participatively at a joint Regional Workshop co-hosted with ODI 27th-28th March 2007 entitled 'Enhancing Pro-poor policy outcomes'. Guiding Principles for achieving Impact through policy change: A resource for researchers, is an appendix to the workshop report

¹⁸ 'What matters in a communication strategy' Bridget McBean, In Brief No 11B November 2005, published by the European Centre for Development Policy Management

¹⁹ ODI on xxx; IIED on xxx; IFPRI on xxx

²⁰ Agenda Setting, James W. Dearing and Everett M. Rogers, *Communication Concepts* 6, Sage Publications 1996 AGENDA SETTING IS A PROCESS comprised of the media agenda, the policy agenda, the public agenda and the interrelationships between these three (and sometimes a fourth, a real –world indicator' that measures more or less objectively the degree the degree of severity or risk of a social problem²⁰).

²¹ *Identifying Influence: Development and Validation of the Connectivity, Persuasiveness, and Maven Scales* Franklin J. Boster1, Michael R. Kotowski2, Kyle R. Andrews3, & Kim Serota1,4, *Journal of Communication* v61 issue 1

²² Report on the Review of ILRI's partnerships: summary of findings, Nairobi February 2011. Draft for discussion by Dr Jurgen Hagmann, Change Management consultant

²³ John Lynam, interview ILRI Friday February 25th 2011

²⁴ A Strategy and Results Framework for the CGIAR *For submission to the CGIAR Fund Council and Funders Forum* February 20, 2011 states: . *Research programs can have no impact without communications. Knowledge, innovations, research results, policy assessments, practical guidance and recommendations for action are not useful unless they are communicated to those who can use them.*

²⁵ The Strategic Objectives of the new CG are:

Food for People: Create and accelerate sustainable increases in the productivity and production of healthy food by and for the poor.

Environment for People: Conserve, enhance and sustainably use natural resources and biodiversity to improve the livelihoods of the poor in response to climate change and other factors.

Policies for People: Promote policy and institutional change that will stimulate agricultural growth and equity to benefit the poor, especially rural women and other disadvantaged groups.

²⁶ AusAid, DFID and other donors interested in the equivalent of ‘Cochrane collaborative’ systematic evidence around specific development topics – see funding swarms to organisations such as 3ie.

²⁷ Consider the following:

- Pilot SMART communications working within the new programme: develop and test and benchmark concrete procedures for comms working with scientists to develop Communication and Engagement Strategy that can be resourced as programme cost. Recommend all new programmes set aside between 10-15% research funds on communication, engagement, and knowledge management and develop indicators to track and trace progress against spend and objectives.
- Document the process of mainstreaming programme communication, and publish results as proposed protocol for other CRPs to follow
- Establish research project for monitoring and evaluating ‘learning laboratory’ of systematised communication within research programme; communicate results as dedicated ILRI feed (to generate reputation for the work) and www.researchtoaction.org and seek funding for researcher to manage (DFID uptake team)
- It should use their comparative advantage in smart web2.0 and open access communication processes to showcase both process and (better) results of this approach. It should aim to become be a CG-wide asset, providing guidance and procedures for ‘smart working’ in order to enable mainstreaming of this approach across other CRPs, and to generate demand from other CRPs for this input from ILRI.

²⁸ CommsConsult is organising such ‘swops’ with client organisations; has experience of brokerage between UK specialist communications personnel and international development NGOs; and knowledge of science journalists and science organisations of all which show the promise of such personnel swops for both individuals and participating organisations

²⁹ I didn’t manage to meet with Margaret Macdonald on my final day, but this area is closely connected with personnel issues. The notice board, for example, should be one of the tactics of an internal communication strategy, which seeks to improve staff’s sense of belonging to, and collective ownership over, the work of the organisation.

³⁰ To include Liz Ogutu, Public Awareness Staff, ‘embedded’ Communication staff in research theme areas