



Global Donor Platform
for Rural Development

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

2022-2025

in alignment with
The Global Donor Platform for Rural Development
Strategic Plan 2021-2025

May 2022

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1. An Overview

The Global Donor Platform for Rural Development is a network/partnership of 40 bilateral and multilateral development agencies, international financial institutions, intergovernmental organizations and foundations. The Platform was formed in 2003 through the collective action to lobby for increased public and private investments in agriculture and rural development. The promotion of development effectiveness for inclusive and sustainable rural transformation as a prime objective of the Platform derives from the global call to implement Agenda 2030 and the agreement on Financing for Development (F4D) by the international community and developing countries.

1.1 How the Platform is structured



The Platform is comprised of:

Members

A network of bilateral and multilateral development agencies, international financing institutions, intergovernmental organizations and foundations. The current membership total is 40.

Focal Points

Each member appoints a contact point to represent the respective organization at Platform meetings and to keep colleagues in their organizations informed about new developments in the international

community and Platform outcomes. Contact points actively participate in the formulation of joint Platform policies and work programmes. They may speak on behalf the Platform at international events. Note that the work streams of the Platform also involve representatives of member organizations who are not the contact points.

Board

The Board is the Platform's main decision-making body which comprises the focal points of all Platform members who pay an agreed annual membership fee.¹ Unless otherwise specified, decisions are taken by two-thirds majority vote. Physical board meetings are convened at least once a year following the Annual General Assembly in January/February of each year and one virtual board meeting in June of each year.

Co-Chairs

The Platform has Co-Chairs, who are elected *ad personam* by the Board members and serve for two years. The Platform Co-Chairs also serve as Chairs of the Board.²

Thematic Working Groups

Working groups with a thematic focus consisting of members and partners, led by their own Chairs and Vice-Chairs to generate a higher level of donor coordination and knowledge sharing around specific technical expertise.

Partners

The Platform enters into partnerships with research institutions, farmers' organisations, civil society organisations, global and regional networks and global initiatives and private sector networks which share a common interest in agriculture and rural development. Each partner organisation nominates a contact person to serve as the official link to the Platform. Representatives from partner organisations are invited to engage in the work streams of the Platform and attend Platform meetings.

Secretariat

The management unit of the Platform to support the implementation of the annual work programme and its outreach and communications. The Secretariat works closely with the Co-Chairs on strategic directions of the Platform and supports the working groups of the Platform on specific themes of common interest and engagement in international events. Since 2020, the Secretariat is hosted by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in Rome, Italy.

2. Our Background and Context

2.1 Current background

The Platform is a unique space for donors to come together to discuss, network, exchange knowledge, and coordinate around a common vision on the role of rural development in tackling global poverty and

¹ Current Board members are Australia, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the European Commission, Finland, France, Germany, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United States and the United Kingdom.

² The current Co-Chairs are the European Commission and Australia.

hunger. Any sound communications strategy for the GDPRD should aim to facilitate these exchanges, getting the right information to the right people, to both inform and inspire Platform discussions and decisions leading to better donor coordination and harmonization.

The Strategic Plan 2021-2025, approved in February 2021, explicitly recognizes the role of communications and outreach in ensuring the Platform remains useful and relevant as a convenor. This updated communications strategy follows the principles of the Plan, focusing on the rural development and food systems nexus, which are the two backbones of the Donor Platform’s vision and mission.

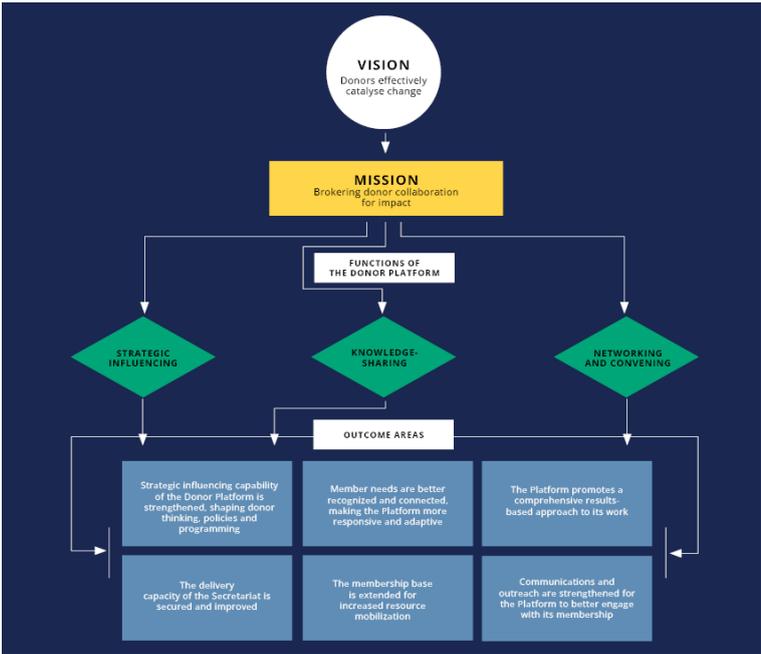
With the Secretariat now fully established at IFAD since July 2020, the guiding principle of the communications strategy remains unchanged - to respond to the needs and demands of the membership in an effective and innovative manner. The concept is based on the triad of (i) creating content stringency; (ii) assuring its coherence with target audiences through (iii) the use of appropriate tools and medium-term communications planning.

This update also aims to respond to frequent calls from the Board to enhance the Secretariat’s capacity to produce sharper, more targeted and impactful communications. This will both strengthen the connections within its membership and widen the Platform’s outreach to potential members and partners.

2.2 Communications in a virtual age

Since 2020, communications became mostly virtual due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Online fatigue and increasingly crowded virtual content are challenges to consider in devising effective tools to reach these communications objectives. Current outreach methods will be reviewed and if necessary, new ones adopted to make sure our target audiences remain fully engaged and communications products appear front and center on all mediums. **Overall, the Platform’s communications approach will be even more purposeful and visual, to better present the vibrant environment of the Platform and consequently, to capture and retain audience attention.**

3. Our Strategic Objectives



Vision and mission

As cited in the Strategic Plan 2021-2025, the Platform's **vision** is:

Donors effectively catalyse change.

Donor investments enable transformation of food systems for better access to safe and nutritious food, improved environmental sustainability and more prosperous rural communities.

The Platform's **mission** is:

Brokering donor collaboration for impact.

The platform brokers donor collaboration to enhance the impact of their policies, investments and programmes for food systems and rural development.

The Platform seeks to achieve its vision and mission through:

- **Strategic influencing**, to help shape the thinking, policies and programming of the global donor community and other actors on food systems and rural development to accelerate progress towards the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and longer-term prosperity and sustainability.
- **Knowledge sharing**, to broker the sharing of evidence, lessons, insights and technical expertise necessary for donors to align efforts, learn from each other and improve the impact of their food system and rural-development related policies and programmes.
- **Networking and convening**, to strengthen networking, relationships and communication between donors and other actors as a foundation for collaboration and innovation.

4. Our Communications Strategy

The Communications Strategy 2022-2025 is built on a theory of change which was developed in line with the principles of the Strategic Plan 2021-2025. The theory of change clearly identifies the overarching communications objective and provides the basis for identifying and planning communications opportunities and activities that lead to the outcomes identified as preconditions for achieving the Platform's long-term strategic goals. This approach is in line with the Secretariat's results-based approach.

4.1 Overarching communications objective

The Platform's communications objectives have been developed to achieve the objectives of the Strategic Plan 2021-2025. The communications strategy's **overarching objective** is:

Wider recognition of the GDPRD to increase donor coordination, influencing and knowledge around the thinking, policies and programming on agriculture, rural development and food systems.

Specific communications objectives

Specific communications objectives and outcomes contribute directly to achieving the overarching objective. These are:

OBJECTIVE 1.

Place the Platform and its members' programmes, strategies and policies high on the rural development and food security agenda.

Outcome areas:

1.1: Value: The value and relevance of the Platform are demonstrated.

1.2: Awareness raising: Greater awareness and understanding of the Platform's focus on the food systems agenda and its links to SDG 2 is generated.

1.3: Positioning: The Platform is positioned as a forward-looking voice on donor action and coordination through high-level discussions, exchange of knowledge, and by engagement with senior-level champions to speak about the Platform.

OBJECTIVE 2.

The Platform is an effective and efficient space to promote relevant donor-led discussions and debates on agriculture, rural development and food security.

Outcome areas:

2.1: Relevance: Members and partners are both informed on and included in ongoing international food systems and rural development-related dialogues.

2.2: Collaboration: Offline and online communications presence is established, with opportunities generated for new dialogues, information exchange as well as connections with a broader professional and age group audience.

2.3: Networking and innovation: Annual General Assemblies and Platform events, workshops and meetings are well attended and achieve the intended outcomes and impact.

2.4: Broadening membership: Membership and partnerships are expanded through effective outreach tools and more targeted contact lists.

OBJECTIVE 3.

The Platform acts as a community hub which promotes the members' common vision of rural development as key to achieving Agenda 2030.

Outcome areas:

3.1: Knowledge exchange: Greater awareness is created amongst Platform members, thematic working groups and partners on each other's knowledge, work and experiences.

3.2: Hub: The Platform is established as an entry point to being updated on donor-led rural development and food systems processes, projects and dialogues.

3.3: Impact: Platform activities are linked to current global debates (including the SDGs) and are championed by members and partners. Collaborative communications with host organization IFAD and Rome-based agencies is achieved.

3.4: Advocacy and outreach: Deeper understanding is generated around the Platform's role, history and influence.

See Annex I for the Communications Strategy theory of change diagram.

5. Our Branding

Every encounter with the Platform leaves an impression that is its identity or brand. This brand exists whether or not there is concerted effort to build one. Making sure this set of features and attributes accurately conveys the Platform's identity and is consistent across all mediums is a key consideration in this communications strategy. Our brand can be used to achieve our strategic objectives.

The Platform is the sum of its members. Its branding is the identity of the unique space where all members come together. It must be clear that the Platform branding is only for this unique space and therefore, is supported by its member organizations without replacing their own organizations' branding.

The Platform branding ensures its activities are recognized amongst its target audience through consistent use of its unique set of features and attributes. This includes targeted Platform messaging, logo, tone of voice and visual identity. Having brand familiarity from our audience ensures our work and knowledge base are amplified and goes the extra mile in terms of collective influence and usefulness.

5.1 What is our brand?

In line with the new Strategic Plan, the Platform should come across in all of its communications as:

- A **strategic influencer** on food systems and rural development; and
- A space to **share knowledge** and to **network and convene**, on accelerating progress towards the sustainable development goals (SDGs), to ensure longer-term prosperity and sustainability in rural areas.

5.2 Our brand attributes

Brand attributes that can help us achieve this include the Platform's **messaging**, its **tone of voice**, and its **logo** and **visual identity**. All three are updated to align with the new Strategic Plan 2021-2025.

5.2.1 Our messaging

In its communications, the Platform should be seen as:

- Responsive and dynamic. A network that can share information and knowledge quickly to both members and those interested in food security and rural development;
- Be the first entry point to new emerging topics relevant to the Platform membership (thought leadership); and
- Be the space to discuss these topics informally and safely.

The Secretariat should be seen as:

- Proactive
- Responsive
- Innovative

To standardize the introduction of the Platform to our audiences, a short elevator pitch has been created for universal use. The purpose of this short pitch is to convey an immediate impression of the Platform to a broad spectrum of audiences and why they should pay attention.

OUR ELEVATOR PITCH:

The Global Donor Platform for Rural Development is a vibrant partnership, advocacy and knowledge network of key donors focusing on food security and rural development.

OUR BOILERPLATE:

The Global Donor Platform for Rural Development is a unique group of key donors who come together to discuss, align and exchange knowledge around their thinking, policies and programming, focusing on agriculture, rural development and food systems. Since 2003, the GDPRD has strived for better donor coordination to accelerate change towards zero hunger by 2030.

Current membership includes 40 bilateral and multilateral development agencies, international financing institutions, intergovernmental organizations and foundations with numerous partners in the international development world.

Thematic messaging

A sharpened focus on the food systems agenda means communications efforts can concentrate on a more targeted range of debates and activities. Content gathering, messaging and storytelling efforts can be more concerted and easily leveraged across the different communications channels.

In line with the Strategic Objectives 2021-2025, Platform efforts have been concentrated on food systems transformation and communication messaging have been centered around this broad theme. Messaging around the Platform's thematic working groups are also targeted for full impact. However, it is key that

any thematic messaging always fall under the Platform’s umbrella mission of a group of vibrant and engaged donors who share a common commitment to rural development and finding effective pathways to achieving the SDGs.

5.2.2 Tone of voice

Shorter and more direct messaging can go a long way in successfully implementing our brand and communications strategy. Presenting the Platform and its objectives in clear language can resonate with both our membership and to those not yet familiar with our work and focus areas. It can also reach those in influential positions who may not have an expert background to understand the often complex issues within food systems and rural development debates. The Platform’s tone of voice should be authoritative yet approachable.

5.2.3 Visual identity



Global Donor Platform
for Rural Development



Global Donor Platform
for Rural Development



A clear and consistent visual impression of the Platform can further amplify its communications efforts. A cohesive visual identity means its logo, fonts, iconography and colour palette are used consistently and in sync across all of its communications channels. This builds audience familiarity with the Platform brand with higher interactive rates with its existing and potential audience.

The brand does not aim to be a household name, but the purpose is to increase participation rates of Platforming events and visits to its website, more dialogue through its social media channels, and more willingness from the Platform audience to both contribute and generate new communications content.

A strong visual identity can also be used to help make complex content more palatable through visualization, and advocacy and outreach more effective by building recognition also through consistent visual cues.

The Platform logo, colour palette and fonts have been updated in 2022 for optimal digital and print representation on all communications efforts, from events, publications, website and newsletters. This was a fit-for-purpose exercise to ensure the visual toolkit is up to industry standard.

6. The ‘Who’s Who’ of Our Communications

6.1 Our Target Audiences

Target audience 1: Existing members and partners

Secretariat time allocation: 60%

Target audience 2: Wider donor and rural development community not yet engaged with Global Donor Platform (including non-active focal points)

Secretariat time allocation: 20%

Target audience 3: The external community interested in food systems and rural development, including audience identified as supporters and influencers, with a special focus on women and youth

Secretariat time allocation for the audience: 20%

Target audience 4: General audience not yet interested in our focus areas

No additional time allocation to the Secretariat.

A strong identity with an approachable voice can also capture an audience not yet interested in our focus areas through social media and word of mouth.

Platform communications principally aim to serve the needs of its network members and partners (target audience 1), in particular (but not exclusively) the respective focal points. The Platform’s primary audience is the donor community (target audiences 1 and 2), including areas dedicated to thematic experts and development partners.

A new website, revamped newsletters, increased social media engagement and a more approachable tone voice can extend the Platform’s communications reach to target audience 3. Target audience 4 can ultimately be reached through a steady increase in online engagement as well as social media presence and connections. Champions of the Platform could be identified from target audiences 1 and 2 for both internal and external outreach across all target audiences.

Successful engagement with target audiences 1 and 2 is when members feel well-equipped to develop

donor programmes and policies, feel part of a community, and take active roles in contributing to communications outputs. Successful engagement of target audience 3 and 4 is when the Platform is acknowledged as an important source of information on food systems and rural development trends with an increase in online communications engagement.

6.2 Our Implementers

Secretariat

The Secretariat has both the mandate and resources to guide and implement the measures and activities described in this strategy. It takes on a proactive role in stimulating knowledge sharing and other forms of exchange and interaction between Platform members.

Members/member organizations

Member organizations are encouraged to share their own learning materials, and in turn, to disseminate formal and informal Platform knowledge products and activities through their own networks. The Secretariat is taking a more active role in engaging members to share this information, through frequent outreach to members of the opportunity of dissemination through our digital channels and through promotion of the usefulness of the Platform's new knowledge hub pages.

7. Communications Tools and Channels

The Platform has a wide range of instruments with a proven track record. User habits and preferences are subject to a variety of factors, and the mix of tools applied should reflect different communication needs. We recommend continuing with most of the established tools, with a few changes and introducing of a few promising new tools, to improve the degree of achievement of the communications objectives.

To better manage limited resources, content should be reworked and adjusted to different tools ("repurposing of content"). For example, a new podcast interview could be presented in various formats – a longer more insightful podcast, shorter more focused sound clips, a one-page highlight PDF and a web article in Q&A format or opinion piece. This is just one of many examples of how communications content can be packaged in different ways to capitalize the content for both primary and secondary audience groups.

The following list consists of a general introduction to the various tools and, in the shaded boxes, a brief overview of how to apply them, a proposed prioritization in the work plan, proposed alignments with target audiences, and the time or frequency of its implementation.

7.1 Website

With the global presence of members and the recent shift towards virtual working, the Global Donor Platform website is an even more central tool for communications. For this purpose, a new website with a more dynamic and responsive front and back end is essential to balance the ambitions of this communications plan with available human resources.

WordPress has been chosen as the new content management system/web platform, being an open source, low maintenance industry standard. The new website is expected to be launched in June 2022.

The new design continues the work of the Thematic Working Group's revamped web pages completed in December 2022. The aim was to reorganize the content to present a clearer

narrative of each group’s issues and purpose, and to share information, activities and knowledge. Increasing knowledge and information exchange among members and partners will be another core component of the new website.

The primary audience for the website remains the Global Donor Platform’s member and partnership base. However, the new website will be developed with a focus on improving both user interface and user experience, to ensure an optimal communications anchor for both Platform members and a wider audience. Together with a redesigned newsletter (eUpdate), the website will be a major advocacy tool for donors – members and partners alike – to demonstrate their intentions and capacity with regard to food security and rural development.

The new website will be fully integrated with the Platform’s social media channels with sharing links implanted on web pages. This provides yet another way for members and partners to help disseminate Platform content and contribute to global dialogues in the digital space.

7.1.1 Website

Priority	A
Target audiences	1, 2, 3, 4
Time/frequency	Ongoing
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redesign of website (First/Second Quarters 2022) • Revising the navigation on the website to further improve an intuitive use (improved structure of content allocation, avoiding of redundancies etc.) • Improved site map to clearly present the Platform’s profile and purpose, and lead newcomers and existing users to ongoing activities, discussions and knowledge base • Documenting the relevance of the website by having a constant inflow of new content in all categories (general news, work stream news, publications, events etc.) • Upgrade to a user-friendly front and back end Content Management System WordPress for the website, that is fit-for-purpose, uses a free open source and with a majority global user base to secure longevity in terms of future updates and new plug-ins • Publishing at least 8 news items a month but updated according to content availability and urgency. The guiding principle is to publish when there is newsworthy content so the frequency may vary. • Enhancing reader friendliness by introducing a morejournalistic style (high quality texts, good balance oflength and content, clear messages including key- takeaway messages, stronger use of visuals such as infographics and photography)

7.2 Newsletters

The primary Global Donor Platform electronic newsletter is the “eUpdate”, issued quarterly to share the news, communications and both upcoming and past activities of the Secretariat and Platform members and partners. To boost subscribers and expand both the network and outreach, the newsletter will be actively promoted at Platform meetings (both virtual and in-person), events and in e-mail

communications. A sign-up box is also prominently featured on the Platform website.

The newsletter provides direct links to the showcased articles on the Global Donor Platform’s website as another channel to increase site visits. The newsletter will be redesigned in line with the modernized visual identity and new website. Starting from June 2022, it will also be hosted on a more user-friendly web platform (MailChimp) for a more dynamic and flexible newsletter layout with more hands-on control. The same care and overview for web security measures will be retained to ensure the same successful inbox delivery rates.

7.2.1 Newsletters

Priority	A
Target audiences	1, 2, 3
Time/frequency	The eUpdate newsletter is issued on a quarterly basis
Action	<p>Additional short-run newsletters will be issued on a monthly basis around a thematic focus that aligns with the Platform’s Strategic Objectives. The standard cycle is 6 months depending on the relevant length of the particular thematic focus.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move to a new email marketing service such as MailChimp for a more user-friendly and industry standard backend • Redesign newsletter to a more flexible and dynamic layout that can better present the growing range of communications products and member news and knowledge for sharing • Newsletter to include more visuals and links to videos and audio products, to create an even more attractive reader experience to increase the engagement rate of both members and non-members. • Increase familiarity of the Platform by maintaining visual cohesion with the modernized visual identity and new website • Introduce a more journalistic style for a more interesting read • Revise newsletter content by including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Compelling quote from a member or partner ○ Latest news ○ Images with captions ○ Member news ○ Infographics ○ Reading lists? ○ Events and Webinars • Actively market the eUpdate through social media channels, on website, during events and in email communications, to increase the number of regular subscribers and readers. • Update email list addresses

7.3 Publications

The Global Donor Platform produces a targeted range of publications, available in both print and digital formats. Publications are produced following a professional creative and production process with high quality control and, when needed, support from IFAD’s Communications Division, with IFAD being the current host of the Platform Secretariat.

All publications have targeted audiences with a complementary release outreach plan, including a

landing page on the website, social media activities, inclusion in the eUpdate and promoted during Platform events. All publications are assessed on whether they meet the target audiences' needs and how they can be improved. Key publications include:

- Annual Report (every year)
- Strategic Plan 2121-2025
- Flagship publications around key current themes. Examples of these include: Stocktaking Report on Donor Contributions to Food Systems and the accompanying Donor Profiles, White Paper on Donor Action in the Food Systems Agenda

7.3.1 Annual Report

Priority	A
Target audiences	1, 2, 3 and 4
Time/frequency	One per year
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Release in digital PDF and print versions • Focus on the Platform's year in review in terms of stories, data and results • Introduction of more infographics • A more visual approach to more effectively present the Platform's activities and achievements • Continue use of professional writers, editors and designers with quality checks in partnership with IFAD

7.3.2 Flagship publications

Priority	A
Target audiences	1, 2, 3
Time/frequency	One per year
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Release in digital PDF and print versions • Use of more infographics and visual imagery • Shorter page count for more impactful and memorable findings • Continue use of professional writers, editors and designers with quality checks in partnership with IFAD

7.4 Social Media

Social media has become an even more important outreach tool in addition to being a channel for social networking. Their successful application can actively increase awareness of Platform activities and results, as well as its position as a thought leader in donor coordination and food security. Social media are effective in addressing the wider development community (target audience 3) as well as a more general audience (4). The Platform's social media channels are its virtual windows into showcasing what it is, does and aim to achieve. In addition to building its network of followers, a secondary effect is to increase outreach and thereby not only raising awareness, but also attracting potential new members and partners.

The Global Donor Platform focuses its activities on channels best fit for its target audience and enjoys a good basic social media presence in these accounts. A focused social media strategy effectively manages the Secretariat's human resources to build and maintain an audience truly interested in the Platform's mission and long-term goals. It is a cost effective tool to scale up communications efforts also in terms of content repurposing. A fit-for-purpose post scheduling system is currently in use and being evaluated.

LinkedIn is currently the Platform's primary social media channel. Its exponential increase in use as a professional networking and knowledge exchange tool has made this channel even more suitable for the Platform's goals. LinkedIn's ability to post short and more in-depth posts together with PDF previews and a broad range of visuals makes this channel the most suitable as a main presence on social media.

LinkedIn is used to provide updates on the Platform activities and events as well as thematic posts for relevant international and UN thematic days and global events. The objective is to build a solid base of interested followers to garner interest in what the Platform does and to eventually engage both members and non-members in online dialogues.

YouTube remains key for both live webcasting and providing recordings of events, webinars and video interviews. The playlist structure is highly effective and will be continuously updated to showcase the Platform's array of video communications.

Twitter is currently being evaluated as an effective tool vis-à-vis the Secretariat's ratio of human resources and its impact results. This channel is currently ranked tertiary in its social media usage. The nature of the Platform communications content has neither the range nor volume to be used substantially on Twitter to maintain its following. This decision will be periodically reviewed against any changes in available human resources or the social media environment.

As the Platform expands its focus of visual communications, **Instagram** will be evaluated in the latter part of 2022 as a possible channel to showcase the increasingly visual communications. Images or infographics developed with its communications content could be used on Instagram to attract a wider and younger development audience, as visual hooks to the Platform's website.

7.4.1 LinkedIn

Priority	A
Target audiences	1, 2, 3
Time/frequency	Year round (but more concerted during conferences, events, flagship product launches, UN and international thematic days.)
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make sure the Platform's social media voice is on par with that of its brand voice and consistent with website and newsletter communications.• Maintain a social media calendar to guarantee an active account throughout the year with one post a week, more frequently when there is relevant content.• Plan and prepare posts in advance of events through applications such as Spout• Produce social media toolkits and share on tools like Trello boards, (post messages, visuals, attachments, hashtags), making them available to Platform members to encourage wider sharing• Follow relevant players and influencers in food security and rural development community, to expand the social network and inspire online dialogue around current debates• Include social media sharing mechanisms on the new Platform website

7.4.2 YouTube

Priority	A
Target audiences	1, 2, 3
Time/frequency	Year round
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintain up-to-date playlists to organize video content by date or category• Ensure video information and tags are current and relevant to the Platform's mission and thematic focus• Include social media sharing mechanisms on the new Platform website• Keep webcast functions open and up-to-date for virtual and hybrid events

7.4.3 Twitter

Priority	C
Target audiences	1, 2, 3

Time/frequency Year round – no set posting frequency. Tweet content to announce conferences, events, flagship product launches and relative to UN and international thematic days

- Action
- Make sure the Platform’s social media voice is on par with that of its brand voice and consistent with website and newsletter communications.
 - Maintain a social media calendar to program tweets when there is content to share.
 - Plan and prepare posts in advance of events through applications such as Spout
 - Include tweets on social media toolkits and share on tools like Trello boards for sharing among Platform members
 - Follow relevant players and influencers in food security and rural development community
 - Include social media sharing mechanisms on the new Platform website

7.4.4 Instagram

Priority C

Target audiences 1, 2, 3, 4

Time/frequency To be evaluated 4th quarter 2022

- Action
- Investigate usage of Instagram channel as Platform communications become more visually impactful
 - Explore potentially younger and more general audience base of Instagram
 - Could be valuable as an additional hook to Platform’s work and members through a more visual channel

7.5 Website content

Communications products developed for the website should build connections by spotlighting and sharing the share the wealth of information generated by the Platform membership and their partner communities. The aim is to spark ideas, develop action points for donor coordination by understanding what others are doing and develop a more equitable knowledge sharing base. This in turn, increases the outreach of the Platform’s communications and advocacy efforts as well as establishes the Platform as a thought leader in the donor community.

Video interviews and blogs articles provide opportunities to members to express their organization’s view on important themes and issues as well as their knowledge and expert insights. This is also occasion for share knowledge and insight from Platform partners. The guiding principle will be packaging this initial content into formats of different lengths and mediums, to be used on the website, social media, newsletters and other products such as publications.

Products:

- Meet our members and partners interviews
- Blog articles

- Spotlight articles on events, publications, workshops, member initiatives
- Podcast series and expert insights on website in audio format
- Knowledge hub content (general and thematic working groups)
- Recommendations Database on International Food Systems and Rural Development reports and meetings
- Weekly website information updates

7.5.1 Meet our members and partners interviews

Priority	A
Target audiences	1, 2, 3, 4
Frequency	Minimum one per quarter
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recorded interviews • Maximize content outreach by repackaging into web articles, social media clips, longer reads or audio products and quotations for advocacy or publications • Calibrate language to include keywords for improved search engine optimization

7.5.2 Blogs

Priority	A
Target audiences	1, 2, 3, 4
Frequency	Minimum one per quarter
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Themes should reflect the different work streams and • Include the voices of experts and thought leaders in the food security and rural development community • Insights, Op-Eds or knowledge sharing articles • Partner with IFAD to wider audience through their web and social media reach

7.5.3 Spotlight articles

Priority	A
Target audiences	1, 2, 3
Frequency	Minimum one per quarter
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web articles after Platform events, launch of flagship publications, workshops or key member initiatives • Include event recording or any other related information

7.5.4 Podcasts

Priority	A
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Target audiences	1, 2, 3, 4
Frequency	6 per year
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start as “The Power of Donors” special miniseries segments within the IFAD podcast Farms. Future. Food. • Continue podcast products as longer audio listens of Platform member and partner experts and influencers. Possible Platform lecture series as part of expansion of knowledge pages on the new website.

7.5.5 Knowledge hubs

Priority	A
Target audiences	1, 2, 3
Frequency	6 per year
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New knowledge hub pages for the thematic working groups • New web page formulated for optimal user interaction • Content well organized in clear categories for both targeted search and browsing • User friendly design

7.5.6 Recommendations Database

Priority	B
Target audiences	1, 2, 3
Frequency	Horizon and scan and update every two months
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newly developed database of aggregated recommendations from International Food Systems and Rural Development reports and meetings • User-friendly search functions for more in-depth research as a one-stop service

7.5.7 Website updates

Priority	A
Target audiences	1, 2, 3
Frequency	Once a week
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly horizon scan of news, events, publications, strategies and policies in the donor, food security and rural development realm • Include members and partners organizations • Include key international material • Encourage sharing of information from member and organizations during meetings and events and through communications with chairs of thematic working groups

8. Events

8.1 General

Events are the spaces where the Platform can showcase its knowledge-sharing abilities. Whether open to the public or private for donors, events always include high-level speakers who are prominent in their respective fields, which boosts the Platform's credibility. Open events attract non-members' interest which builds the Platform's networking capacity, while closed donor events provide a unique space for honest discussion.

Even though members have rated in-person events as the most effective and most appreciated way to exchange knowledge and network, virtual events have become the new standard since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. As pandemic-related restrictions are slowly loosened, events will turn to hybrid format, when possible, for maximum participation. While most sessions are planned well in advance, the Platform also pays particular attention to current food system and agricultural development related news and holds timely conversations on current and upcoming issues as needed.

To provide different virtual spaces for both large and small group interactions, events will continue to be planned in various formats, including:

- High-level webinars and panel discussions, with expert keynote speakers and diverse panelists
- Workshops and webinars led by Thematic Working Groups
- Closed donor round tables, following Chatham House rules.

8.2 Annual General Assembly (AGA)

Any determinations are subject to the resolution of the Board. The Secretariat, with backing from the Co-Chairs of the Board, has proposed a hybrid format of the 2022 AGA to combine in-person and virtual participation. The proposed concept includes:

- a shorter period (2.5 days, split up in 2 days AGA plus 0.5 day Board Meeting)
- workshops developed and led by the thematic working groups
- a clear focus on allowing the donor community to meet and network
- to exchange and learn more about urgent strategic needs and what problems donors are facing when reaching out to their respective target groups
- discussing concrete examples from the perspective of practitioners and open peer-group exchanges

Due to the ongoing COVID situation, the format of the AGA will reflect the most effective modality for networking and key discussions to take place. Whether high-level event, panel discussion or an event focusing on networking, the agenda will be proposed to and decided on by the Board.

9. Advocacy and Outreach toolkit

The Platform's Strategic Objectives of Strategic Influencing and Networking both require building larger a larger membership and partnership base. This communications strategy takes into consideration the basic requirements of having handy tools available to both the Secretariat and members to introduce the Platform to a new audience.

The initial toolkit would include a handy corporate two-page brochure and a generic deck of slides to introduce the Platform, which can be customized to any presentation be it to potential new members or for internal use.

In terms of outreach, the toolkit will include a set of Platform logos, visual identity guidelines and Word and Presentation templates for general communications.

9.1.1 Advocacy Toolkit

Priority	B
Target audiences	1, 2, 3, 4
Time/frequency	One time only, to be updated as needed
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short corporate brochure in digital and printable PDF formats • Slide deck in PowerPoint to introduce the Platform, customizable to specific audience if needed • Platform website with new section dedicated to Advocacy content, and another section showcasing the Platform’s history

9.1.2 Outreach toolkit

Priority	A
Target audiences	1
Time/frequency	One time only, to be updated as needed
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Branding logo set in print and digital formats • Branding visual identity guidelines including colour and font usage • Branded Word templates for all communications including concept notes and meeting minutes • PowerPoint templates for presentations • Limited range of branded merchandising for use at the flagship events such as the AGA and other in-person outreach opportunities

10. Our Way Forward

In 2023, the Platform will celebrate its twenty years since inception. This updated Communications Strategy has this milestone in sight as it modernizes the Platform’s communications focus and tools. As part of the expanded advocacy and outreach tools, this anniversary will be acknowledged with:

- A small commemorative icon
- A celebratory message, to look ahead with both our forward-thinking Strategic Plan 2021-2025 and Communications Strategy 2021-2025 in place.

10.1 Evaluation of communications

Measuring the success of the Global Donor Platform and our communication measures is key to the promotion of the Platform and assuring its recognition by the target audiences. It also provides lessons learned in terms of proof of concept. Are we reaching our target audience and are the relevant tools being applied? To what extent are we creating awareness and expanding our Platform network? These are fundamental questions that feed back into the analysis of our communications. Typical indicators to review include:

- Number of users per month (visits, downloads) of the Platform website? Is there a significant

increase?

- Average duration of visits to the website
- Number of participants of Platform events per session and the number of events conducted by each work stream
- Number of websites that refer to the Global Donor Platform (through links, news or features)

Surveys are the probate tool to acquire qualitative data. However, they must be well planned and usage restricted to very important occasions. Tools applied are Matomo (Piwik) for monthly quantitative web stats and annual surveys for qualitative feedback.

10.2 Establishing a network of communicators: Maximizing outreach and output

The Secretariat's communications efforts is targeted to the member focal points and target audiences 1 and 2. There is an additional outreach opportunity for the Platform to liaise its activities with communications experts in its member organizations. This would help amplify the Platform's work in the organizations of its member and partners as well as gather content for the Platform's website. Outreach activities include:

- Compile a list of communications professionals from member and partner organizations willing to share content through their own contacts and communications channels
- Facilitate content sharing through the Secretariat's Communications Officer as focal point
- Expand the Secretariat's communications content by re-packing communications products from members, for sharing on the Platform's website and newsletters.

10.3 Budget

The planned measures will be financed from the current Platform budget. If activities or the introduction of new tools exceed the budget, the Global Donor Platform's Board will decide on priorities and preferences.

10.4 Planning documents

Communications planning for the Global Donor Platform includes an annual work plan.

Annex I: Communications Strategy 2022-2025 - Theory of Change

Achieve vision and mission	Overarching Communications Objective	Specific Communications Objectives	Communications outcomes	Achieve strategic objectives	Target audiences
<p>VISION:</p> <p>Donors effectively catalyse change</p> <p>MISSION:</p> <p>Brokering donor collaboration for impact</p>	<p>Wider recognition of the GDPR to increase donor coordination, influencing and knowledge around the thinking, policies and programming on agriculture, rural development and food systems.</p>	<p>Objective 1. Place the Platform and its members' programmes, strategies and policies high on the rural development and food security agenda.</p> <p>Objective 2. The Platform is an effective and efficient space to promote relevant donor-led discussions and debates on agriculture, rural development and food security.</p> <p>Objective 3. The Platform acts as a community hub which promotes the members' common vision of rural development as key to achieving Agenda 2030.</p>	<p>1.1: Value - The value and relevance of the Platform are demonstrated.</p> <p>1.2: Awareness raising - Greater awareness and understanding of the Platform's focus on the food systems agenda and its links to SDG 2 is generated.</p> <p>1.3: Positioning - The Platform is positioned as a forward-looking voice on donor action and coordination through high-level discussions, exchange of knowledge, and by engagement with senior-level champions to speak about the Platform.</p> <p>2.1: Relevance - Members and partners are both informed on and included in ongoing international food systems and rural development-related dialogues.</p> <p>2.2: Collaboration - Offline and online communications presence is established, with opportunities generated for new dialogues, information exchange as well as connections with a broader professional and age group audience.</p> <p>2.3: Networking and innovation - Annual General Assemblies and Platform events, workshops and meetings are well attended and achieve the intended outcomes and impact.</p> <p>2.4: Broadening membership - Membership and partnerships are expanded through effective outreach tools and more targeted contact lists.</p> <p>3.1: Knowledge exchange - Greater awareness is created amongst Platform members, thematic working groups and partners on each other's knowledge, work and experiences.</p> <p>3.2: Hub - The Platform is established as an entry point to being updated on donor-led rural development and food systems processes, projects and dialogues.</p> <p>3.3: Impact - Platform activities are linked to current global debates (including the SDGs) and are championed by members and partners. Collaborative communications with host organization IFAD and Rome-based agencies is achieved.</p> <p>3.4: Advocacy and outreach - Deeper understanding is generated around the Platform's role, history and influence, with momentum built around the 20th anniversary in 2023.</p>	<p>Strategic influencing</p> <p>Knowledge sharing</p> <p>Networking and convening</p>	<p>1: Existing members and partners</p> <p>2: Wider donor and rural development community not yet engaged with Global Donor Platform</p> <p>3: External community interested in food systems and rural development, audience identified as supporters and influencers, with a special focus on women and youth</p> <p>4: General audience not yet interested in our focus areas</p>

Annex II: Communications Strategy 2022-2025 – Action Plan (2022)

Channels and Tools	Communications activity	Description	Communications Outcomes	Indicator
<u>Social Media</u>	LinkedIn	LinkedIn acts as the primary social media tool of the Platform. Updates on Platform activities and events are posted, as well as thematic posts for relevant international and UN thematic days and global events.	1.1: Value 1.2: Awareness raising 1.3: Positioning 2.1: Relevance 2.2: Collaboration 3.1: Knowledge exchange 3.3: Impact	1 post per week, frequency could vary according to content availability and number of relevant thematic days 15% increase in number of followers and engagement rate per year Scheduling tool implemented Calendar of relevant posting days created
	Twitter	Twitter is tertiary social media tool of the Platform.	1.2: Awareness raising 1.3: Positioning 2.1: Relevance 3.1: Knowledge exchange	1 tweet per week Scheduling tool implemented Calendar of relevant posting days created
	Instagram	Usage to be explored for future use.	1.2: Awareness raising 1.3: Positioning 2.1: Relevance 3.1: Knowledge exchange	Evaluation completed and possible new account by end of 2022
	YouTube	The YouTube channel is the space for the Platform's longer video content like extended interviews and event recordings.	1.2: Awareness raising 1.3: Positioning 2.1: Relevance 3.1: Knowledge exchange	All public Platform events and interviews are posted on YouTube
<u>Website and content</u>	New website	New fit-for-purpose website on WordPress with revised design and site map for optimal user experience and knowledge exchange. Includes new knowledge hub pages and search functions.	1.1: Value 1.2: Awareness raising 1.3: Positioning 2.1: Relevance 2.2: Collaboration 3.1: Knowledge exchange 3.3: Impact	1 Platform website on WordPress. Extension updates as necessary.
	Blogs	These include web articles from members and partners, sharing insights, opinions and knowledge. These can also be produced in partnership with IFAD's communications division for wider outreach through the IFAD website and social media channels.	1.3: Positioning 3.1: Knowledge exchange 3.2: Hub 3.3: Impact	4 blogs per year

	Meet our Members and Partners Interview Series	These interviews will be web recorded, edited and transcribed for a range of web and social media content.	1.3: Positioning 2.1: Relevance 3.1: Knowledge exchange. 3.3: Impact 3.4: Advocacy and outreach	8 interviews per year
	Podcast Series	The first four podcast segments are part of IFAD's larger podcast series. After these four, podcasts are the Platform's own audio content.	3.1: Knowledge exchange 3.2: Hub 3.3: Impact 3.4: Advocacy and outreach	6 podcast episodes per year
	Event articles	After each Platform event, an article describing the event is written and posted to the website.	1.3: Positioning 2.1: Relevance 3.1: Knowledge exchange. 3.3: Impact 3.4: Advocacy and outreach	One article for each event
	Current events and policies	Populate website with news, policies and strategies from member and partner organizations.	3.1: Knowledge exchange 3.2: Hub	Weekly horizon scan to update website
	Recommendations Database	The recommendations database is complete and regularly updated with new publications. Database usage steers more views to the Platform website.	3.1: Knowledge exchange	Database completed, launched and updated once per quarter.
<u>Events</u>	AGA	The Platform's Annual General Assembly will be held in hybrid format in June 2022. The standard timetable should be once a year and based on a specific focus relevant to current events and debates.	1.1: Value 1.2: Awareness raising 1.3: Positioning 2.1: Relevance 2.2: Collaboration 2.3: Networking and innovation 3.1: Knowledge exchange 3.3: Impact	1 AGA per year
	Timely, open events	Webinars and workshops based on current news and events, with high-level keynote speakers and panelists	1.1: Value 1.2: Awareness raising 1.3: Positioning 2.1: Relevance 2.2: Collaboration 2.3: Networking and innovation 2.4: Broadening membership 3.1: Knowledge exchange 3.3: Impact	2 events per year

Closed donor/member events	Private conversations and round table discussions for honest and open donor conversations, following Chatham House Rules	1.1: Value 1.2: Awareness raising 1.3: Positioning 2.1: Relevance 2.2: Collaboration 2.3: Networking and innovation 3.1: Knowledge exchange 3.3: Impact	2 events per year	
Thematic Working Group-led events	Webinars and discussions based on topics of interest to the Thematic Working Groups	2.3: Networking and innovation 3.1: Knowledge exchange. 3.2: Hub 3.3: Impact	2 events for the Rural Youth Employment TWG 2 events for the Land Governance TWG 2 events for the SDG2 Roadmap TWG	
Advocacy and Outreach	Newsletter - eUpdate	The e-newsletter updates members on the activities of the Platform.	3.1: Knowledge exchange	4 eUpdate newsletters sent per year New design in second half of 2022 MailChimp implemented Email lists updated
	Newsletter - thematic	Short run e-newsletters focused on delivering news and updates on a particular theme pertinent to Platform members.	1.2: Awareness raising 2.1: Relevance 3.1: Knowledge exchange	Runs of up to six months, only when necessary
	Annual Report	The Platform's year in review publication.	1.1: Value 1.2: Awareness raising 1.3: Positioning	1 Annual Report distributed to members and published on the website. Also in print version for in-person events and meetings.
	Flagship Platform Publications	Flagship reports produced by the Platform Secretariat and endorsed by the Platform Board.	1.3: Positioning 2.1: Relevance 3.1: Knowledge exchange	At least 1 per year
	Refreshed visual identity	Modernized and technically updated logo and visual identity elements.	1.1: Value 1.2: Awareness raising 1.3: Positioning	Completed by second quarter 2022
	Advocacy brochure		1.2: Awareness raising 2.4: Broadening membership 3.4: Advocacy and outreach	One brochure completed by 2022
	Advocacy presentation slide deck		1.2: Awareness raising 2.4: Broadening membership 3.4: Advocacy and outreach	One slide deck completed by 2022



Global Donor Platform for Rural Development

Communications Strategy 2022-2025

Global Donor Platform for Rural Development Secretariat
Hosted by the International Fund for Agricultural Development