

State Building Contract Phase III
Complementary Support in Sierra Leone
Service Contract N° FED/2019/411-287

Communication
Strategy and Action Plan

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National Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate (NaMED)

Develop a Monitoring and Evaluation
Communication Strategy

Non Key Expert Mission
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GLOSSARY

CSAP	Communications Strategy and Action Plan
DFID	Department for International Development
GoSL	Government of Sierra Leone
MCCU	Millennium Challenge Coordination Unit
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOPED	Ministry of Planning and Economic Development
PFM	Public Finance Management
UNDP	United Nations Development Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities

PROJECT SYNTHESIS

Title of the project	State Building Contract Phase III - Complementary Support in Sierra Leone
Reference of the project	EuropeAid/139229/DH/SER/SL
Contract Number	N° FED/2019/411-287
Contracting Authority	European Union Delegation in Sierra Leone
Country	Sierra Leone
Project Duration	42 Months
General Objective	The general objective of the overall State Building Contract III is to promote sustainable and inclusive growth and support the consolidation of peace building and the state-building processes in Sierra Leone.
Specific Objective	The specific objective of the complementary project is to strengthen institutional capacity in PFM, including budget revenue management, strategic planning and monitoring, budget formulation, execution and oversight, both at the central and at the selected sector levels and monitoring/evaluation of the development policy.
State Building Contract Team Composition	<p>State Building Contract Team will be composed of:</p> <p>KE1: TL / PFM Expert: 550</p> <p>KE2: PFM expert-budget support : 550</p> <p>Non-Key Senior Experts : 2,100</p> <p>Non-Key Junior Experts : 1,100</p>

1. FOREWARD

In Sierra Leone, the planning, monitoring and evaluation of results remain problematic and inadequate across the public sector and constitute a cause for concern. Since the conclusion of the war in 2002, efforts have been made to prepare national development plans in the form of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). Unfortunately, little attention had been paid to the critical issue of monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Evidence abound that, these national development blueprints were not designed with performance tracking in mind. Consequently, routine monitoring had been uneven in scope and quality, evaluation was sparse in coverage and use, and budgetary provisions for M&E in the national budget have been absent in most cases, and grossly inadequate, where they do exist. This has in the past limited the outcomes and impacts of our development efforts. Additionally, the Executive, Parliament and the general public have been left insufficiently informed on the value for money of public investments, the successes and failures of public programmes, and the lessons which provide the foundation for informed Policy decision-making, reform and development.

In response to the above, the Government of Sierra Leone, in 2018, made a commitment to the establishment and operationalisation of a national monitoring and evaluation system that will enhance the understanding of what we do well and where we should aspire to do better in achieving developments.. This commitment was actualised by the establishment of the National Monitoring and Evaluation Department (NaMED) which ultimately became a Directorate and placed under the direct supervision of the Office of the President in June 2020. By doing this, the Government manifested its desire to place significant thrust in ensuring the availability of accurate data and information at all times to help us plan, measure our development progress and interventions, as well as guide our planning and decision-making..

A critical and urgent responsibility of NaMED was to develop various institutional documents including a National Monitoring and Evaluation Policy, and Strategy, Standard Operating Procedures/Manual, an M&E Operational Results Framework for the MTNDP and a Communications Strategy. The Government and NaMED with support from development partners like the European Union and, UNICEF is pleased to have accomplished these tasks. It therefore gives me a great pleasure to introduce this Communication Strategy as a major step towards the enhancement of our new approach to M&E.

This Strategy applies specifically to the how NaMED intends to communicate what it does, how it does it, how is it different from others and who to communicate with both internally within the organisation and externally across government entities, local councils, the media, civil society, development partners and other relevant stakeholders I am confident that, all and sundry will demonstrate strong cooperation in order to improve on the effectiveness and efficiency of communicating our mandate.

Dr. James Edwin

Director General, NaMED

2. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Government of Sierra Leone through the National Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate in the Office the President would like to express our sincere and deep appreciation for the support provided by the European Union through its State Building Contract Phase III - Complementary Support in Sierra Leone project for the development of this communication strategy. We express similar gratitude to the B&S Europe Team that led the implementation of the project and the team of consultants hired by them to develop the strategy.

We wish to thank all those who participated in the stakeholder consultations, including staff of MDAs, Civil Society Organisations, NGO (local and international), Media Institutions, and Local Councils. Their comments improved each draft immeasurably.

3. INTRODUCTION

3.1 Purpose and Scope

Introducing a Monitoring and Evaluation system in the governance apparatus faces a number of expectations; (1) Citizens are yearning for reliable change in their development status; (2) Government is yearning for reliable information on progress on development results and wider access to it; (3) government is focused on the efficient and effective management of resources so as to attract investment and donor support; (4) Donor partners are seeking for authentic impact related stories about their support to development programmes and projects. All of these expectations require a measured and practical approach if NaMED is to accurately portray itself for what it is and to succeed in persuading the general public that its existence is relevant to national development.

Having a communications strategy in place means that NaMED will not simply be reactive, i.e. visible only when an event or circumstance necessitates it but it can purposefully build and manage its public image and relationships with the media and its stakeholders, so that when it wants to institute a process or respond to a situation, it has the social capital to build on.

This Communications Strategy and Action Plan (CSAP) has benefited from the input of many people across the country during rounds of consultation. Advice, comments, support and alternatives were provided by communications, thematic, and institutional staff in all stakeholder or beneficiary institutions we identified, not limited to MDAs, Foreign Offices (embassies), Citizens (men, women, youth), International donors, Private sector institutions (Chambers of Commerce, etc.), Civil society Organisations (Including Local and International Organisations), and National and local media (press, radio and television).

Following an Inception period and report, we consulted broadly and transparently among stakeholders in order to capture the views of relevant parties such as those:

- affected by the work of NaMED:
- who will be involved in the implementation of NaMED mandate:
- those that have stated interest in NaMED's work:
- that have knowledge and expertise in NaMED's work, and
- that support or can block solutions related to the work of NaMED

We also consulted stakeholders who might be concerned by the initiative, seeking the whole spectrum of views in order to avoid capture by specific constituencies. The minimum consultation standards ensured that all relevant parties had an opportunity to express their opinion and proffer solutions.

We also looked into the work of other Monitoring and Evaluation Institutions such as Statistics SL, to see how they structured their communications, and how they have been able to generate their media coverage, created platforms for engagement and feedback, and measured impact.

The most challenging areas in shaping this strategy have been around the following issues:

- Communicating NaMED's mandate to citizens of different educational and exposure levels in terms of access to information on m and evaluating development results in the public sector .
- using the most appropriate medium of communication
- how to get the balance right between being popular and visible and delivering the right messages to more targeted audiences and how to build capacity and the communications infrastructure in order to be able to do both
- creating a genuine media platform for the public so that they are the ones making their voices heard

3.2 The Context of Monitoring and Evaluation and NaMED

Conducting monitoring and evaluation across the public sector continues to be seriously constrained by an array of factors. Currently, there are M&E units in MDAs and in the various LCs. However, there is no properly established national M&E system that links MDAs and the LCs to conduct effective M&E of key policies, projects and programmes at national and sub-national levels. M&E activities conducted by MDAs and LCs are ad hoc in nature and largely donor compliance-focused. Additionally, the status of M&E across government is at different levels of development and application. Some MDAs such as the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS), and the Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MoHS) had developed M&E systems¹ without recourse to national standards or guidelines. The absence of a coordination mechanism between these systems cast doubts on their effectiveness and efficiency. The vision/objectives of some of these M&E frameworks/policies are quite different from that of the Central Government. As such, it is very difficult to link M&E with other systems (e.g., planning, budgeting, procurement) when there is a proliferation of different approaches to M&E.

Adequate resourcing (personnel, finance and materials), of M&E at all levels is yet to receive the attention it deserves. Very limited technically capable personnel in the subject matter are available and no designed capacity training programme defined. Allocations for the conduct of M&E by MDAs and LCs in national budgets have been grossly inadequate. Most programmes and budgets are designed without due cognizance to the importance of M&E, leading to limited allocation of funds for M&E, especially the Government of Sierra Leone funding component. On the other hand, most donor funded projects or programmes however, have provided funding for M&E activities. The inadequacy of funding coupled with the limitation of logistical support is a core challenge in the execution of M&E functions across the public sector.

The collection of credible and accurate data by MDAs and LCs that inform planning and policy decisions remains an outstanding issue. A system for proper data collection and analysis is yet to be developed and effectively operationalised. Currently, data collection is mostly done irregularly and manually, which does not guarantee accuracy, in-depth analysis and reliability. The absence of a central coordination mechanism for data collection, analysis and sharing has led to data fragmentation and proliferation of separate activities by MDAs and LCs thereby undermining quality assurance. The challenges posed by the low quality of data and information are compounded by the untimely preparation and dissemination of quality M&E data.

¹ In the case of MAFFS, Planning Evaluation and Monitoring Management Information System (PEMSI) was established with mainly support from World Bank and in the case of MoHS.....

The identified challenges provide the justification for developing a culture of high performance, accountability, and results-focused orientation at the national level. This will bring about the intended development results, which has guided the formulation and development of this Communications Strategy.

3.3 The NAMED Mandate

NAMED's mandate is clearly stated in the Government of Sierra Leone Budget and Statement of Economic and Financial Policies for the Financial Year 2019; Pages 17 – 18, Items 75 – 77 and the Sierra Leone Finance Act 2019 – Item 30: Establishment of a National Monitoring and Evaluation Department; Pages 25 – 26 and supplement to the Sierra Leone Gazette Extraordinary Vol. CXLX, No. 3 dated and signed on the 11th January, 2019.²

In his presidential address on the occasion of the State Opening of the Second Session of the Fifth Parliament on Thursday, 2nd May, 2019, it was stated that the National Monitoring and Evaluation Department (NaMED) has been created in the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, with a mandate to create an effective national institutional policy framework to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Medium Term National Development Plan and other Government and donor funded projects.

NAMED's overall objective is to create an effective national institutional policy framework to monitor and evaluate Government and donor funded projects as well the National Development Plan.

Specifically, NaMED will:

1. Lead the monitoring and evaluation of all public sector programmes and projects including donor funded projects;
2. Design and implement a National Monitoring System that links the monitoring units in MDAs, Local Councils and donor funded project units on one hand with NaMED, the Ministry of Finance, Parliament and the Office of the President, on the other;
3. Develop monitoring guidelines and manuals for use by all MDAs and Local Councils and support their capacity building needs to effectively undertake monitoring;
4. Track and record progress of implementation of all projects as well as the National Development Plan using modern and appropriate technology;
5. Lead the conduct of independent baseline studies, mid-term and final evaluation of all projects;
6. Conduct special studies on various aspects of public sector projects;
7. Establish and maintain a database on all completed and on-going projects.

As a new institution NAMED has not only seized the opportunity for specific communications programming, but It has done so only when the need arises and these needs come far in-between. The approach has largely been on using reporters and only for news coverage. Practically, the Directorate has not been making a deliberate effort to bring the media to itself; rather we have been going to the media and in a less structured manner.

² The Department was later renamed a Directorate and placed directly under the Office of the President in June 2020 by a specially Presidential Memo

This Communication Strategy is meant to address this limitation and to usher in a deliberate and structured communication mechanisms for the benefit of the organisation.

4. NAMED'S COMMUNICATIONS GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The following communications goal and objectives are the key drivers for all NaMED communications activities over the next five years:

4.1 Overall Goal

To raise the visibility of, and communicate NaMED's operations including what we do, how we do it, and how different we are to key audiences in the public sector, relevant stakeholders, employees and the general public.

In five years' time, we expect NaMED to be known for creating an effective national institutional policy framework to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Medium Term National Development Plan and other Government and donor funded projects and programmes.

The Department will generate the right media that audiences would understand and be persuaded because they view them as important, worthy and right. This strategy sets a clear direction for building a communications capacity in NaMED that works at local and national levels, with strategic priorities to deliver the core communications objectives stated above.

We will be working within a budget in order to deliver this strategy. This demands that we have clear priorities and strategic vision, and that we are also clear about what we cannot do.

4.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of our Communications Strategy are:

1. To promote the strategic visibility of NaMED's mandate and operations.
2. To ensure public and stakeholder awareness and education about NaMED and its operations including our success stories and challenges.
3. To strengthen communications functions and services both within and without NaMED

5. STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

5.1 Key Objective 1 - Promote the strategic visibility of NaMED's mandate and operations.

In order to achieve our overall goal, we would first need to build an identity and brand. Our identity will be built on and focused on the element of our mandate as provided below;

The key is keeping the essence of simplicity at the core of how we communicate with all audiences from MDAs, the government, general populace, donors and the media. We are proposing to use the following language to describe NaMED:

5.1.1 The NaMED Identity and Band

The key elements of our identity will be ART – Accountability, Results and Transparency

Accountability - Our work and operations will be characterized by holding us and stakeholders accountable for development interventions at all levels including the public sector and donor/development partners.

Results - We will focus our mandate and operations on achieving development results that will bring change in the lives of the people.

Transparency – We will be open in providing information about our work on one hand and the results that are achieved or not achieved on the national development interventions on the other.

Our Logo

As a government and national institution, NaMED has adopted the national emblem and logo as its logo. All products including communication products will bear thus. As NaMED is envisaged to transition into an independent statutory agency, the logo will be reviewed accordingly and appropriately.

Our Strapline

In the above regard, our strapline will be;

“Our ART is to ensure Accountability, Results and Transparency in national development processes”

We will be consistent in the application and use of this strapline. All products including our logo and publications emanating from NAMED, will bear this strapline.

We will exercise discipline and consistency on this so it will make a difference to the overall collective visibility and identity of NAMED. Our logo and strap line will be used in all our visual communications. We believe that If we get all of these elements right as we build our brand, and if we remain bold and clear in our delivery we will not have a problem standing out. We will be able to demonstrate that NaMED is different because we will speak in a different, more direct, way. We will look different. As we build more experience and confidence in doing this we will build momentum, and more external opportunities will be available for NAMED to make an impact.

Activities to achieve this Objective

To achieve this objective, NaMED will:

1. Conduct courtesy calls to key stakeholders including relevant committees in parliament, key MDAs, local councils, development partners including UN agencies, bilateral and multilateral organisations, and embassies.
2. Undertake a grand launch of NaMED.
3. Popularise our Website www.named.gov.sl and ensure that it is regularly updated with news and current events about NaMED's activities
4. Establish and publish a Bi-Annual newsletter on key activities of NaMED and progress on key development programmes and projects.
5. Make accessible to key stakeholders to our management information system (NaMAMIS) and make public its dashboard.
6. Produce and communicate/disseminate annual report on NaMED's activities and health/status of public sector development projects
7. Collaborate with strategic partners in delivering and communicating our mandate.
8. Create Youth Clubs wherein children and youth will play a key role in sharing messages through storytelling, roles plays, etc.
9. Create and support Cooperatives with women, who will be taught basic monitoring and evaluation skills
10. Produce brand materials such as;
 - Stickers
 - Posters
 - Banners
 - Signposts
 - Bill boards

5.2 Key Objective 2 - To create public and stakeholder awareness and education about NaMED and its operations including our success stories (External Communications)

The voice of citizens and our stakeholders will take center stage in the department's approach to the media. The Department will not actively seek to take space away from others by over-emphasising its profile. Instead audiences will be encouraged and supported to communicate the actions that they have taken to bring about change and to share their experiences of strengthening demand for improved access to and delivery of services.

NaMED will build and nurture contacts, networks and knowledge within the media in order to be in a position to influence them. The aim will always be to connect them to the stakeholders by being a credible source for information, and by bringing them directly to them as spokespeople.

The media will be used to promote specific objectives/campaigns in the area of the National Monitoring System. To create momentum for this, the department will create key media 'moments' that will become a focus for its public relations. In these media moments, efforts will be on promoting the Department's mandate and key messages on the National Monitoring System.

Examples of these media 'moments' would include:

- Official launch of NaMED website and Identity (including Logo);
- Dialogue forum between NaMED and all stakeholders;

- Publication of external communications materials such as TV spots or Radio Jingles;
- Launch of baseline studies, mid-term and final evaluation of all government projects;

In terms of media channels, NaMED will prioritise Radio and Television stations as the most effective way of reaching target audiences. The Department shall also employ other media such as Newspaper publications, video documentaries, posters, social media or SMS (text messaging).

Particular attention will be paid to the language needs of various stakeholder groups and considerations will be made where local language versions of materials are required.

The website will increasingly become the Department's window on the world. Investment in our on-line content output and capability is crucial for NaMED to develop a strong and credible external presence. The aim is to evolve it as a news, engagement, and learning site.

Activities to achieve this Objective

To achieve this objective NaMED will;

1. Produce and disseminate Information, Education and Communications (IEC) materials in the form of stickers, posters, banners, signpost, bill boards etc to communicate our mandate, activities and operations.
2. Organise and conduct radio and television programmes including discussions on public, commercial and community electronic media outlets on key activities of NaMED
3. Establish social media presence on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsAppA combination of the following communication tools shall be used by the Department to reach out effectively to the public:
4. Embark upon PA System advertisement or real time face to face public education
5. Place Prime time advertisements, and jingles on popular programmes and identify peak hour programmes for greater outreach
6. Organise regular Community engagements like town hall meetings
7. Work in active collaboration with LCs and MDAs
8. Sign MOUs with mobile networks for mass text messaging
9. Sign MOUs with Media Institutions for specific institutional commitments
10. Create secured information portals different from the website
11. Locate suggestion boxes in all government project locations
12. Hold training workshops at district level with District Stakeholders
13. train the media on Specialised or Institutional Reporting on NaMED

5.3 Key Objective 3 - To strengthen communications functions and services within NaMED (Internal Communications)

Internally, the Department shall utilise bulletin/information boards, Newsletters, social media handles and brochures to ensure staff have a thorough understanding of the broader issues, are timely informed and always prepared. In addition, the Department will establish an internal communications system to assist in building operational functionality. Overall, our Internal Communications will be defined by the following:

- Communications emanating from NaMED's Leadership – Top Down and Vice versa
- Staff to Staff Communication
- Communicating during change in NaMED. As new entity, NaMED is expected as it has in the last three year to constantly evolve, restructure, and change. We should be able to have strategies on how we can communicate these changes internally. In a year or so NaMED is expected to evolve into an Agency
- Organisational culture communication – NaMED would need to define the type or organisation culture we want to live and communicate that effectively within the organisation.

All media products will be subjected to scrutiny by The Senior Management Team and signed-off by the Director General before every NaMED publication is approved

A weekly meeting will be facilitated by the Communications Unit and attended by M&E officers of the Directorate in Freetown. The key objective of these meetings will be to:

- a) share information
- b) Produce operational action points for local and national level activities, and action points of support/resources etc.
- c) brief of media stories on key local and national NaMED activities and potential impacts

It is vital that the Department's communications development is underpinned by investing in core communications services, so that it has the tools and support to operate effectively. Investment in communications equipment cannot happen in isolation, and there will be a parallel investment in the IT and telecoms system. This is key to being able to transmit and deliver images and messages effectively.

The Department will invest in core communications services and skills – media relations, online and print, images (photo & video) so that it has the ability and capacity to access the media and public professionally and effectively. Increased investment in communications represents a commitment by NaMED towards building a long-term sustainable media relations that supports the Department's work for the next five years.

Activities to achieve this Objective

We will achieve this objective by doing the following:

1. having regular Consultations with our donors and partners on internal capacity building aspirations
2. Lobbying our donors and partners for specific support to our communications infrastructure

Figure 5

Communication activities and channels

The main communications activities and the appropriate channels are outlined below:

No.	Activity	Channels
1.	Public information, and sensitisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Community/Group Meetings ✓ Dialogue fora

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Radio programmes ✓ Project Events ✓ Specific Workshops
2.	videos, photos and stories.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Whatsapp ✓ Facebook ✓ Website ✓ TV stations ✓ workshops
3.	Press release	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Newspapers ✓ TV and radio stations ✓ Notice Board ✓ Whatsapp ✓ Facebook ✓ Website
4.	Newsletter/E bulletins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Emails ✓ Websites ✓ NaMED events ✓ Council and ward offices
5.	Banners/posters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ NaMED events ✓ Strategic locations across the country
6.	Implementation status reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Stakeholder meetings ✓ Management meetings ✓ Seminars and workshops ✓ Strategic partnership meetings

6. PRIMARY AND SECONDARY AUDIENCES

6.1 Description of our Audiences

Our audiences will include stakeholders and actors that are directly and indirectly involved with and affected by NaMED's work. These are government Ministries, Departments, and Agencies, Local Councils, policy makers and lawmakers, donor and development partners, civil society organisations, traditional authorities, the media and the general public

The following categories have been identified as both our primary and or secondary audiences. Primary audience are those that have direct interest and whose work will have direct effect on the operation of NaMED while secondary audiences are those that have indirect relationships with NaMED's work and may not necessarily need to about or options (Table 1 below provide a tabular categorisation of the respective audiences)

The Executive including the Presidency and MDAs

The GoSL and her constituent MDAs are responsible for setting the development agenda in Sierra Leone which are captured in the National Development Plan (NDP). To further enhance this, NaMED was been established to provide a monitoring and evaluation framework for its implementation. In this case this category is a key primary audience for communicating NaMED's

Development/donor partners including bilateral, multilateral agencies, UN and INGOs

International donor partners in Sierra Leone play critical roles as stakeholders including following up on the proper implementation of programmes decided between them and the government. Their role is critical in reporting to their headquarters the successes in the implementation of programmes they finance. As such, it will prove critical ensuring they are correctly informed about the progress and results obtained by NaMED.

Civil society and Community based organizations

CSOs represent an indispensable support to governmental action, reaching populations through approaches that allows for effective distribution of resources amongst the most vulnerable socio-economic sectors of Sierra Leone

The media

Local media play a pivotal role in the dissemination of information to citizens, particularly to villagers who receive information from local radio channels. As such local media are critical in reaching inhabitants across the 22 local councils³, accomplishing one of the key aims of the State Building Contract for Sierra Leone (SBCIII) programme⁴ and reinforcing citizenship. As such, local media are strong stakeholders for NaMED.

National mainstream media represent an essential support. As stakeholders they:

- Shed light on governmental institutions by validating their accountability and fulfilment of commitments to good fiscal management and inclusive development
- Disseminate success stories to public audiences by showing how implementing sound economic management benefits the population through welfare, education, health, employment, etc.
- Bring visibility to NaMED's activities through their broadcasts and creating platforms for ministries' representatives, opinion leaders and investigative journalists.

General public/beneficiary groups (women, men and children)

Women defend the interests of the society through the burden of care they have for the well-being of their family and children. As such, they will support the mission of NaMED if they know how they would benefit from sustainable and inclusive development projects. If resources are limited, then focusing on women will bring better results in terms of their participation

Young citizens are the most important beneficiaries of NaMED's work. With 62.5% of the population under the age of 25 years⁵, youth play a crucial role in defining the future of Sierra Leone. NaMED's work will be critical in ensuring the best conditions for a sustainable, efficient and inclusive development. Campaigns should therefore focus on making youth aware of their capacity to lead the country towards transparent and inclusive development and making youth assume the role of watchdogs by making them know what is at stake for their future and the future of the country in terms of better education, health, and employment

Table 1: Categorisation of NaMED's Audiences

n°	Audiences	Primary	Secondary
1	The Executive including the Presidency, Ministers, Deputy Minsters and Heads of MDAs	✓	
2	Technical staff of all MDAs especially those implementing public investment programmes and projects (Capital	✓	

³ Sierra Leone has 19 local councils (5 city councils and 1 municipal council in the urban areas, and 13 district councils in the predominantly rural areas) and 149 chiefdom councils (CLGF, 2013) <https://localdemocracy.net/countries/africa/sierra-leone/>

⁴ See page 2 of ToR : "NaMED aims to make Sierra Leone a better place through enhanced access to information, data, and knowledge. NaMED will deliver solutions that improve the effectiveness of national development programs in all ministries, departments, agencies (MDAs) and local councils (LCs)."

⁵ <https://sierraleone.unfpa.org/en/publications/sierra-leone-2015-population-and-housing-census-thematic-report-children-adolescents>

	Projects)		
3	Local Councils/Governments	✓	
4	Development/donor partners including bilateral, multilateral agencies, UN and INGOs	✓	
5	Private sector involved with public sector contracts on public investment projects and public/private partnership projects		✓
6	Civil society and community based organizations		✓
7	Academic institutions, universities & research institutions		✓
8	The media		✓
9	General public/beneficiary groups	✓	
10	Employees, contractors and staff of NaMED	✓	

6.2 Key Messages and Sources

NaMED's messages will be guided by what its audiences need to know, what they care about and how NaMED delivers results. Our messages will connect and resonate with our audiences.

NaMED will communicate three central messages – the “key three.”

- ✓ The first key message will define the issue;
- ✓ The second will outline the problem; and
- ✓ The third will explain the solution.

The key three should always be developed by the Communication Unit with approval from the leadership and distributed to all internal team members and communicated consistently, without variation, at all times.

While we will develop sub-messages for each target audience, those sub-messages should fit under the key three, and those overarching messages should be communicated at all times by all leaders/members to all media, audiences and stakeholders.

Table 2: “Key Three” Message of NaMED

-
1. Funding development projects is no longer enough; now, for every development project to achieve results, it requires to be monitored and evaluated to ensure results are achieved.
 2. Far too many public sector projects are not implemented on time; they are abandoned, and mismanaged.
 3. The people of Sierra Leone deserve the change that development projects aim to achieve. The best way to ensure this is to put in place and make sure effective, transparent and accountable M&E system works.
-

7. CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION

The media is the main conductor of information and connector between the Department and its beneficiaries. The reality in Sierra Leone today is that facts unreported do not exist. Like facts, people and issues will be ignored unless they are visible, hence the growing fascination with traditional and new media. In today's media-dominated world, to be credible you must be visible and relevant.

Traditional media - TV, radio and newspapers - is the most influential and important for visibility. But direct forms of digital communication are growing rapidly in importance as more people go online for their news and information sources. This offers NaMED an exciting opportunity to communicate with and connect with Sierra Leoneans around the world, particularly through the internet.

7.1 Traditional Media

Radio is the most utilized medium of communication among Sierra Leoneans: 70% of the population listens to radio.⁶ This is due to high levels of illiteracy and poverty, preventing widespread use of other types of media. The cost of TVs and newspapers are beyond the reach of most people. Radio stations exist in all areas of Sierra Leone and are used by people of all ages, gender, political affiliations and socio-economic status. According to the Independent Media Commission, there are 186 local and regional radio stations, in Sierra Leone. Community radio stations are increasing in number. Such stations are more likely to provide content that reflects community concerns and issues but are hampered by limited capacity and resources. The SLBC Radio dominates radio listenership on a national level.

Peak time for radio listening is between 6:00 and 9:00 a.m. and between 6:00 and 10:00 p.m.⁷ Other statistics, prepared by research consultant Graham Mytton, include:

- Radio is listened to by 82% of Sierra Leoneans, 5% more than in 2015 (the last batch of statistics).
- 86% of men and 78% of women are listeners; both figures have increased since 2015.
- Radio listening is at the highest levels in Freetown, Bombali, Moyamba, Pujehun, Tonkolili and Kenema Districts. It is lowest in Koinadugu and Kailahun (where transmitters continue to have technical problems).
- Well over half the radio audience did not go to school.
- Most listening is at home. 75% of the listening audience has a radio set at home.

Radio programs including "Morning Coffee", which now airs on SLBC Radio from 7:00 - 9:00 a.m. daily and continues to host important news and current affairs issues. It's probably one of the most listened-to radio news programs of the day.

⁶ *Independent Media Commission*

⁷ "2015 Media Use Survey," commissioned by Foundation Hironnelle and Cotton Tree News (CTN)

Other programs include the very popular Good Morning Salone on 98.1, Nightline with DJ Base, On the Spot, Salone Satellite, and several other local language programs. On The Spot and Salone Satellite are news programs that feature reports from the provinces and “live to air” reporting from events and activities – usually government-related or NGO workshop oriented.

Television broadcast has seen the greatest change. There are now three widely watched TV channels in the country, the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) STAR-TV and most recently AYV TV.

From Graham’s “Media Use Survey”, most TV viewing is in the evening. It peaks between 7:30 and 9:30 p.m. The following are some of the other findings:

- 26% watch TV at least sometimes, an increase from 16% in 2018.
- Viewing is highest in Freetown where 29% ever watch and lowest in Bonthe and Pujehun where less than 1% ever watches.
- Most viewers watch TV in the homes of others or at community centers, bars or cafes. Only 9% of all viewers watch at home.
- Most TV viewers have at least some education; even so, 39% of the total TV audience never went to school.

The new crop of TV shows includes the very popular Wae Yus, Podium, and Hot Seat. These new programs tend to focus on “gossip” or “congosa” (in Krio) and are fairly popular. ‘Wae Yus’ is an interesting mix of “social programming” featuring local issues. It runs from 8:00 p.m. to 9:00 PM on alternate days of the week.

A new addition to the TV line-up is a program called AYV on Sunday, which features in-studio guests. AYV on Sunday is supposed to feature informed debate on issues of national importance and it follows the same formula as others – studio guests and call-in opinions.

There are now 223 newspapers officially registered with the Independent Media Commission (2021), however readership remains low due to the high levels of illiteracy (70%) and a lack of purchasing power among the public. The print media is also Freetown-focused, with little reach beyond the Capital.

Although the number of newspapers has multiplied, the newspaper industry is still dominated by sole proprietorships and establishments run by a handful of individuals. With limited resources, newspaper proprietors find the cost of newsprint highly prohibitive. Faced with this kind of financial constraint, the average publication consists of an 8-page tabloid with circulation limited primarily to Freetown the capital city and the major District Headquarter Towns.

The average circulation on a daily basis is about 300,000 and there is intense competition among the various papers as they vie for the attention of the same limited pool of urban elite readers mainly residing in Freetown. This has also resulted in newspapers soliciting paid news coverage, a practice regarded as unethical by Western standards but considered as a very important lifeline for the struggling reporters of the

news in Sierra Leone. Despite these limitations, newspapers remain a force to be reckoned with in shaping the climate of public opinion in Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leonean newspapers are published in English, yet only approximately 30% of the population is fluent in this language. Radio and television programs are mainly in English, although some radio stations are making efforts to address this linguistic divide by increasing the number of hours of programming in local languages. The net effect of this is that media practitioners generally are forced to direct their messages to a national audience without regard for ethnicity.

Major factors that will continue to influence the press and the growth of the media in general include the democratisation processes, civil society, technological innovations, improved economic conditions, peace, and stability. With improved interest in the Media, following the repeal of the Libel Laws , the number of media outlets including newspapers and radio stations will continue to rise, and media activities are bound to spread to other parts of the country in the years ahead.

We have put the channels/platforms for communicating our messages into two categories; External and Internal Communications.

While there are various types of external communications channels, and NaMED may not have the resources to make use of them all, we will try as much as possible to use the following channels; *earned media*, *paid media*, *new media*, *events* and *face to face meetings*. We will not use these channels in isolation. We will combine them where necessary to enhance effectiveness. The guiding principle is ensuring that no matter what channel we choose, we will remain consistently on our key three messages.

Earned media

This includes media for which we do not pay. This may include news articles, editorials, op-eds, broadcast talk show interviews and any kind of media that is free to get. NaMED is however cognizant of the unusual media landscape in Sierra Leone where most media practitioners expect “something” from organisations in return for coverage of news emanating from and or affecting them.

NaMED will also generate news hooks, such as commissioning and releasing the results of a monitoring report and end of year reports.

Paid media

This will include any communication we have to pay for. These will include but not limited to print and broadcast ads, advertorials, and audio news releases. Often times budget restrictions will preclude a paid media component to your outreach campaign because to be successful, paid advertising normally has to saturate a market; however, sometimes, a paid ad can be timed and positioned in such a way that it does not have to cost a lot. Potential partners for *earned* and *paid media* will include local radio and TV stations, and newspapers

New media

This includes blogs; social networking, such as WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter; Applications, such as online chats and instant online polling; and mobile interactions, such as text messaging. We will take advantage of the low cost of new media and also its potentials of reaching younger audiences. It will also help NaMED reach large groups of people, and the advantage of our target audiences to provide feedback to our work and communications.

Events

Hosting events can provide solid opportunities for directly bringing our messages to our target audiences. Nationwide events, such as a launch of NaMED, reports, trainings and conferences will be particularly well placed for kicking off a major campaign. Events like consultations, town hall meetings, trainings and workshops at regional, district, and community levels can be effective at bringing NaMED's messages down to beneficiary communities, community based organisations, local councils, traditional authorities etc. Any of these events will feature stakeholders and beneficiary groups and individuals. NaMED will also make use of these events to generate positive paid and earned media.

Face to Face/Virtual Meetings

Courtesy calls, introductory meetings, consultations, planning and implementation meetings will form the bulk of making use of face to face meeting with policy makers, stakeholders, civil society organisations and development partners, NaMED will reach out and communicate our messages through these channels. Where face to face meeting is impeded because of the global shift in communication due to the COVID-19 pandemic, NaMED will make use of videoconferencing using tools like Zoom.

Internal Communications Channels

Without an organised internal communication strategy, the message received is left to chance. NaMED and its management and staff will take a proactive approach by creating fluid communication channels in a three dimensional way – top-down; down-top and horizontal directions .

For our internal communications, NaMED will make use of the following channels;

Emails and intranets

All staff members will be registered on the NaMED email system which presently is your.name@statehouse.gov.sl This will be the main official line of work related internal and external communication. In future, when NaMED becomes a statutory body, this may change to using direct NaMED domain such as in xxxxx@NaMED.gov.sl

Messages via email can be targeted to particular groups and sent rapidly, but in some non-office environments where there is access to email other methods may be used. In addition, an intranet and document management system may be used to share, store and archive work related documents. Feedback facilities may be incorporated in the intranet system, so that staff will have the opportunity for two-way communication.

Presentations

Presentations in the forms of, power points, audio visuals will used to convey certain messages and content to staff members by the leadership, Directors and senior managers. Staff members are encouraged to interact, ask questions, provide feedback during such presentations.

Management/Sector/Team briefings/group meetings

This channel will be used in the form of management, sector/directorate, team and group meetings and briefings. Management meeting will be held monthly, while sector directors will be required to hold weekly meetings to discuss progress, plans and updates. The minutes of these meeting must be shared with the leadership and shared on the document management system/share folder.

Face-to-face meetings

NaMED encourages individual staff members to express their views directly to line managers in direct face to face meetings. These are potentially good methods of two-way feedback, but managers are encouraged to understand the importance of upward communications, and success may depend on how consistently they

act in this respect. In dispute settlement where face to face meetings do not provide the right solution, staff are encouraged to escalate through the NaMED hierarchical structure

Management by Walking About

NaMED leadership, Directors, managers are encouraged and urged to practise management by walking about (MBWA). While the name may look misleading, the concept suggests that line managers periodically walk around their staff, see what they are doing and interact with them.

7.2 The Role of Distributors

Producing communication products is one crucial step but without dissemination, they would be rendered useless. To succeed it does not only take financial support (paid air time or newspapers) but also a deep knowledge of the media landscape: newspapers, radios, televisions, news portals, events. It most specifically requires having a privileged contact with the decision-makers (newspapers Chief Editors, TV & radio producers), who take the final decision about how and when our communication products will be published or aired.

These intermediaries between ourselves and the broadcasters and publishers are called "distributors". They play an essential role, acting as liaisons between NaMED's Communication Team and the decision-makers. Distributors are the ones who introduce our propositions and products to the right person able to take the right decisions and ensure our programmes will be aired on prime time on the right channels, newspapers and portals.

Distributors are indeed the middle persons who maintain professional contacts with the decision-makers of today's Sierra Leonean media and will introduce favourably NaMED's Communication Team and production to their attention.

8. ACTIVITY PLANNING, INDICATIVE SCHEDULE AND BUDGET

This Communications Strategy is focused on supporting the implementation of the NaMED mandate for Efficient Service Delivery to the Citizens. As such, the following activities will drive the achievement of communications and visibility for the next five years.

This section covers Main Communication Activities Envisaged in the Short and Medium term:

I. Launch of the Initiative

One way to achieve communication and visibility of the initiative is by a launch of NaMED. This is the biggest opportunity to introduce the initiative, the source of the funding (the European Union), activities, intended beneficiaries and partners. The launch ceremony is also a key means through which the Department's objectives, benefits and opportunities can be publicised to all stakeholders. It is an important event for potential partners including paramount chiefs, development partners, civil society organisation and the private sector, who can get to understand and be interested in the initiative.

II. Organise public sensitisation and awareness raising campaigns on the Initiative

NaMED will need to organise public sensitisation programmes on the initiative and its specific activities, benefits and opportunities to stakeholders and the general public. This will help raise awareness not just about the initiative, but also its funder, the European Union. This will be done using media such as community or group meetings, local radio and television programmes to introduce the initiative to the public and other potential audiences. These programmes can include paid talk shows and unpaid programmes involving senior staff appearing as guests and providing commentary on NaMED activities. These programmes are also an important source of gaining feedback from beneficiaries.

However, it is important that before such opportunities are created, staff receive training in basic public communications skills and etiquettes (dos and don'ts). In communication, one must appreciate the fact that while people can easily express themselves in English or other local languages, it is important to note that 'public communication' requires certain skills and etiquettes. Such skills need to be provided to staff to empower them in delivering the communication objectives of the Action.

III. Establish a Website

A NaMED website will be crucial not just in showcasing the opportunities and benefits of the initiative and report its outcomes but could promote the image of the Department as a viable and credible institution. It will also provide visibility for the European Union as a dependable funder. The website will also provide a major reference point for local and international development partners, funding agencies, potential partners, media institutions and the general public to seek information on NaMED and its activities. It will also serve as a repository for stakeholders and the general public to access certain documents, reports, strategic plan and others. A website will help to reinforce the corporate image of NaMED, strengthen its brand presence and credibility across the country and internationally. The website can serve as a medium to announce upcoming events and update and showcase innovation from the field and a link with the diaspora who may wish to contribute to national development.

IV. Establish a Social Media Footprint

Social media platforms (such as twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, and WhatsApp) are critical to keeping NaMED engaged with the public generally and beyond. Key activities will be posted in the form of news reports, videos and photos.

V. Establish a Newsletter

A newsletter will be established to provide regular update on the activities, achievements and experiences of NaMED, while ensuring that key stakeholders and the general public are informed. It will provide a major opportunity to establish a brand presence for NaMED and visibility for the European Union as well as help inform readers and the ordinary public interested in the work of NaMED. Through the newsletter also NaMED can motivate performance, promote unity and improving morale among its Key Stakeholders.

VI. Publication of Press Releases

The occasional publication of press releases of major events and activities of NaMED and its partners will serve to provide visibility of the initiative and the EU as well as keeping the general public and beneficiaries informed of developments under the initiative.

VII. Collaborative Media Coverage of Activities

NaMED will ensure that major activities are covered on print (newspaper), electronic (radio and television) and social media. This way, the visibility of NaMED, and the European Union can become enhanced and NaMED will reach out to a wide variety of audiences on its activities and programmes. Regular coverage on local and national media is essential to the success of this communication strategy. NaMED will establish a memorandum of understanding with key media houses to achieve this.

VIII. Print Posters, Leaflets and Flyers

Printed posters, leaflets and flyers as well as T-shirts will serve to complement other communication activities by disseminating concise and precise information on key aspects of the work of NaMED and the Action. These could reach indirect audiences in partner offices including donors and policy makers. It is an accessible means of knowing about the activities under the initiative, its successes and challenges.

IX. Establish Billboards at various Locations across the country

There will be billboards at NaMED office and strategic locations across the country, informing on the initiative, and the European Union. This will help give visibility to the European Union and NaMED and make it easy for stakeholders, partners and others to get involved. It will also help reinforce its corporate image and credibility.

X. Undertake beneficiary communication feedback

NaMED will undertake beneficiary feedback on the impact of its Communications and activities. This will provide crucial feedback on the impact of the activities and provide useful information to developing future Communications and Visibility activities.

9. SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES AND SCHEDULE

Figure 6

No	Activities	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5
1	Launch of NaMED	x				
3	Establish a Website	x				
4	Establish and maintain a Social Media Footprint	x				
5	Establish a Newsletter	x				
6	Publication of Press Releases	x	x	x	x	x
7	Collaborative Media Coverage of Activities	x	x	x	x	x
8	Print Posters, Leaflets and Flyers	x	x	x	x	x
9	Establish Billboards at strategic Locations	x	x			
10	Undertake beneficiary communication feedback	x	x	x	x	x

10. EVALUATION AND MEASURING IMPACT

Performance indicators are an important way of assessing whether or not we are on track to reach our communications objectives. Each element of this strategy has clear outputs and an overview performance indicator table has been designed for clear reference. Additionally, an action plan with performance targets has been developed (see figure 7). This element of performance management will help ensure the delivery of this strategy, given that the decision has been made to invest in it for the long-term.

It takes a lot of effort to ensure that people remember your messages and take action on them. This is why it's important for us to measure the impacts of our media activities: we need to know what works and what does not and to assess whether we have achieved our objectives. Media impact indicators will be developed from our objectives and they will be used to measure what our media work has achieved.

We would conduct a Communications coordination meeting to gauge what has been achieved in relation to the content of strategy every six months and after every 2 years; we will do a review of the strategy and

update the content depending on the development of NaMED or change in media or communication ecosystem

11. CRISIS MEDIA MANAGEMENT

We shall introduce a crisis media plan that will focus on how NaMED will communicate with the media and other key stakeholders about a crisis or allegation. Most crises don't get picked up by the media either because the story was not newsworthy or because an organisation took speedy action to address the situation. Other times, a crisis may get media attention but the attention lasts for a short period of time because people see how well an organisation has resolved the situation.

The potential risks could include but not restricted to the following:

- Allegations of discrimination or unfair treatment of stakeholders by NaMED staff
- Fraud or misuse of funds by NaMED staff or beneficiaries
- NaMED staff accused of engaging in political or other activities which escalate unrest/conflict

In the event of a crisis, a media task force will meet and provide communications advice through the Senior Management Team, as well as co-ordinate all aspects of communications response including managing the messaging and media.

In all messaging related to a crisis, NaMED would ensure that they are and are seen to be:

- Credible
- Trustworthy
- Concerned about the outcome
- Committed to a successful conclusion
- In control of the situation

The Communications lead will handle all media enquiries and responses. Where appropriate, he/she or the Director General will act as the key spokesperson.

A Crisis media Checklist will be developed to provide an overview of the steps and actions required to effectively manage the reputation of NaMED and ensure there is a clearly defined escalation policy and decision-making process.

Appendices attached to this document:

1. Indicative Budget
2. Activity Plan
3. List of Stakeholders consulted