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LIBERIA

**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
SERVICES IN SUPPORT OF
THE MINISTRY OF
AGRICULTURE (TASMOA)
COMMUNICATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND AGRO-
COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY
FINAL REPORT**

JUNE 2010

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DISCLAIMER

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FOREWORD

Liberia is a post-conflict nation striving to rebuild its socioeconomic infrastructure and institutions left in ruins by more than 14 years of civil war. It is also working assiduously to restore the dignity and hope of its people.

Throughout much of the history of Liberia, agriculture has been the mainstay of the country—and its greatest livelihood. More than 75 percent of the population has been engaged in various agricultural pursuits. However, more than a generation of civil unrest, which culminated in a protracted and costly civil war, dislodged and decimated the Liberian population and undermined the development and progress of the agricultural sector.

Nevertheless, agriculture remains potentially viable and offers great potential for the achievement of national food security: stamping out the outflow of millions of dollars of foreign exchange on the importation of the country's staple food, rice—and becoming a net contributor to overall Gross Domestic Product and foreign exchange earner.

Consequently, under the administration of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the agricultural sector has been given a renewed focus and emphasis with the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) mandate to pursue policies, programs, and strategies to achieve national food security under the Poverty Reduction (‘Lift Liberia’) Strategy. Under this new mandate, international partners, including the US and its implementing agencies, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), African Development Bank (AfDB), World Bank, African Union (AU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), New Partnership for Agriculture Development (NEPAD), European Union (EU), and other bilateral and multilateral partners have reached out in unprecedented manner to assist the MOA to design and implement strategies and programs to develop the agricultural sector—and achieve national food security. This was evident by the recent presentation and approval of the revised Liberia Agriculture Sector Investment program in Dakar, Senegal.

Internally, the MOA has aggressively undertaken several reform and change measures. We have begun the process of strengthening our County Agriculture Offices and Extension Services. The Central Agriculture Research Institute (CARI) is undergoing a process of rebirth and is beginning to engage in more applied agricultural research to benefit our farmers. We have embarked on an aggressive program of manpower development to give our personnel improved skills, hire younger and more vibrant field officers, and infuse new dynamism in our program implementation efforts. We have re-engaged with our partners in more creative and collaborative ways than ever before, and as a result, new initiatives, such as our signature urban farming, farmer field schools (FFSs), and lead farmer programs are beginning to take root and be felt throughout the country. More significant, we have placed emphasis on our most important clients, the Liberian farmers, and are working hard to empower them and build their capacities.

Yet we continue to encounter a missing link in the overall implementation of our country-wide programs: the lack of know-how and the skills to proactively, expeditiously, and adequately engage, inform, educate, and motivate our farmers, while simultaneously changing old attitudes and concepts of farming. This is particularly important since one of the goals that our Ministry has set for itself is to *take today's ordinary farmer and transform her into a modern 21st century farmer with the skills and capacity to work and turn her plot into a profitable field and to utilize tools and inputs essential to the achievement of this objective*. In this regard, one of our goals is to change antiquated, backbreaking, low-yielding, and often

unproductive agriculture production methods to modern agricultural practices that rely on simple but efficient tools and other inputs, including fertilizers to increase farm yields.

Consequently, the MOA, which has forged a productive and beneficial partnership with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), requested USAID to assist the Ministry develop its agro-communication strategy. USAID consented, and mandated its implementing partner in Liberia, ARD, carry out the assignment. This Agro-Communications Strategy is the outcome of this effort. It is the first comprehensive Agro-Communications Strategy developed by the MOA in its more than 40-year history. It contains insights into the challenges facing the Ministry—and provides strategic guideposts for enhancing intra- and inter-agency communication—and more significantly, for reaching out to our farmers.

We would like to thank our partners USAID and ARD for providing the funding for the consultancy project—and for the assistance rendered the consultant. We also thank the consultant, Mr. Morris M. Dukuly, Sr., for developing this strategic agro-communication document.

Florence A. Chenoweth, Ph.D.

Minister of Agriculture, R.L

ACRONYMS

ACC	Agriculture Coordinating Committee
ACDB	Agriculture and Cooperative Development Bank
AfDB	African Development Bank
AU	African Union
CAC	County Agriculture Coordinator
CARI	Central Agriculture Research Institute
CBR	Community-based Radio
CDA	Cooperative Development Agency
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
DAO	District Agriculture Officer
DOA	Department of Agriculture
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FFS	Farmer Field School
GoL	Government of Liberia
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
MPW	Ministry of Public Works
MSME	Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises
NEPAD	New Partnership for Agriculture Development
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
TASMOA	Technical Assistance Services in Support of the Ministry of Agriculture
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the past two years, the Technical Assistance Services in Support of the Ministry of Agriculture (TASMOA) Project, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), has successfully carried out several studies on the technical capacity, and administrative and human resource needs of the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA). The studies have been underpinned by the recognition that the agriculture sector is potentially one of the most significant engines of economic recovery, development, and national prosperity. It also has unsurpassed potential for foreign capital investment and a net foreign exchange earning sector. Currently, agriculture provides employment and income to more than 75 percent of the Liberian population and, when fully harnessed, is the bedrock for national food sufficiency, security, peace, and stability.

The TASMOA studies have provided critical guideposts for MOA leadership in this post-conflict environment, and identified key strategies designed to drive the transformation of the agriculture sector, and ensure successful achievement of the food security, economic revitalization, and development goals of the Poverty Reduction (‘Lift Liberia’) Strategy (PRS)—MOA’s overall statutory mandate.

One of the critical pillars identified in the TASMOA assessment is the development of an Agro-Communication Strategy for the MOA. In response to this need, the MOA requested USAID and its implementing partner, ARD, Inc., provide the following technical assistance:

1. Conduct a needs assessment to analyze intra- and inter-agency communication systems within the MOA while simultaneously ensuring MOA staff’s and stakeholders’ perceptions, expectations, and needs with respect to internal communications and communication between MOA and partners are reflected.
2. Identify communication channels to propagate MOA’s message to its core constituencies, especially the smallholder Liberian farmers, and other stakeholders and beneficiaries.
3. Develop an Agro-Communications Strategy that incorporates a communications flow chart clearly delineating lines of communication within the MOA and between the Ministry and its various stakeholders, and recommend effective implementation guidelines for the new strategy.
4. Develop a MOA Communications Action Plan in line with the Agro-Communications Strategy.

The needs assessment draws upon existing information, qualitative data, and anecdotal information gathered through travels to two MOA regional offices and hours of conversations with key officers of the Ministry and partner organizations, including the Minister, Deputy and Assistant Ministers, MOA line staff, TASMOA Chief of Party, and consultants.

FINDINGS

Emerging out of the needs assessment is an indisputable fact: communication (i.e., vertical, horizontal, cross-sectional, and sender-receiver-feedback model) is poor, weak, or severely lacking in the Ministry of Agriculture. Several internal variables contribute to the poor state and quality of MOA’s internal and external communications practices. These factors, (administrative, technical, operational, and logistical) have been identified and shared with the principal leaders of MOA. Thus, focus is placed only on the internal and inter-agency dimensions of the communications challenges facing MOA:

1. Internal and External Communication

Intra- or internal communication at MOA is largely mono-directional and vertical (Figure 1, Appendix I), where and when it occurs. Information is treated as proprietary, and it is compartmentalized.

Communication is restricted to the exchange of memoranda or to information sharing at meetings. Within and across departments, responsible authorities often appear unaware of program activities or their status, and rely on junior officers to report to senior staff meetings.

At the county or regional level, the challenge is the same. County Agricultural Coordinators (CACs) report that they are often queried about reports they have already submitted to MOA's central office utilizing the existing administrative chain. It emerged that these reports, which are expected to be transmitted to higher-level staff, often remain buried among other reports or locked up in desk draws.

Similarly, information flow from the MOA central office to county offices is weak and haphazard. Ostensibly, this is because the Extension Department is understaffed, overwhelmed, and under-capacitated (both resource and personnel), and cannot adequately respond to demands of the county offices it supervises.

2. External/Interagency Communication

Communication between MOA and other government agencies such as the Ministries of Gender and Development and Health and Social Welfare, as well as local and international partners, is poor or sparse, in spite of regularly held Agriculture Coordinating Committee (ACC) meetings or county-level ACC meetings. (Figure 2, Appendix I represents current external communication patterns).

Coordination, Communication, and Follow-up. Communicating decisions, plans, policies, programs, or merely following up on activities either within the MOA or between the MOA and partners is a challenge. For instance, MOA has embarked on a large transformation of the agriculture sector. Yet these activities and programs are not widely, clearly, consistently, coherently, or professionally communicated or publicized. When they are publicized, the communication effort lacks the coherence, professional, and promotional elements that enhance understanding and appreciation of the MOA's and partners' efforts.

National and International Partner Coordination. Coordination with local and international partners, except at monthly ACC or other similar meetings, is a challenge. Consequently, farmers—MOA's most important constituency—are inadequately informed and their concerns insufficiently represented in program planning and implementation. Further, duplication, poor preparation, and confusion often tend to characterize assistance to farmers. For example, programs designed to enhance agriculture production, such as the Farmer Field School (FFS), by teaching local farmers new, more productive, and environmentally friendly farming methods, encounter farmer resistance because of poor information dissemination and education, as well as lack of coordination and coherence of messages. As a result, the farmers remain steadfastly wedded to the traditional, back-breaking, shifting cultivation methods, and much needed financial and other resources are not available.

As a result of poor communication and inadequate information sharing, there is much duplication in service delivery and capacity-building initiatives in the agriculture sector. For example, the Ministries of Gender and Development and Health and Social Welfare have assumed responsibilities to work directly with farmers on various agriculture projects although they do not have the knowledge, skills or the capacity to engage in service delivery to farmers. Four questions arise in this regard: could resources which these agencies administer be pooled and allocated to the MOA, which has the statutory responsibility and institutional capacity to carry out such functions on behalf of the government? Where is

the economics of skills? How well are farmers served with such competing programs? How are the real needs and concerns of the farmers reflected in these programs?

3. The Communications Division

The Communications Division is the heart of MOA's public information dissemination and education programs. The name however is a misnomer, because the 'division' is only a shell of what it claims to be. Currently, there are only five people in the division. If these four were optimally qualified and experienced—and possessed the capacity, including requisite equipment—they could fulfill the mandate of the section and adequately explain the policies, programs, and activities of MOA. Unfortunately, this is not the case.

Rather, these five have neither the education, knowledge, skills, nor the experience to manage an effective, dynamic, creative, aggressive, and proactive public information program for a Ministry with a mandate that is critical to overall national peace, security, and stability. The highest level of education among the division staff is a bachelor's degree in Mass Communication with no external training or exposure to professional best practices and activities. The staff is lethargic, unimaginative, and seems to possess little sense of one of the most critical elements of news: timeliness. News stories are as late as a week or longer, or never get published. Often, they lack the elements of good, professional journalism. Except for a consultant—a former director of the section who was retired and rehired—the division lacks any capacity, human and resource, to carry out the responsibilities of a modern public information office of an important national agency such as the MOA, and is unable to advocate on behalf of programs it should undertake to advance the MOA's public information agenda.

AGRO-COMMUNICATION FRAMEWORK AND STRATEGY

The core focus of MOA's Agro-Communication Strategy is based on Minister Dr. Florence A. Chenoweth's vision to "take a non-farmer and turn her or him into a successful farmer", and thereby achieve food security in Liberia. Consequently, the communication strategy identifies tools and steps that can lead to the achievement of the goal of reaching every farmer regardless of location. Consequently, this Agro-Communication Framework is anchored in four major strategies that rely on key multimedia approaches to achieve their objectives. They are:

Strategy One: enhance internal and external communication channels and linkages among MOA staff and between the Ministry and its external donor and implementing partners.

Strategy Two (two-fold): (a) reorganize the Communications Division to make it structurally and professionally efficient and build its capacity to inform and educate key constituencies of the Ministry of Agriculture, while simultaneously explaining MOA's reform and change agenda to engender understanding and cooperation—and enlist support and participation; and (b) create a new bureau that engages in outreach and is capable of informing and educating ordinary subsistence Liberian farmers to empower them to become 21st century successful farmers with the capacity and skill to use appropriate technology and new agriculture techniques—and are aware of the change agenda within the Ministry and their role, as farmers, in furthering that agenda.

Strategy Three (three-fold): (a) rebrand, reposition, and make the MOA visible and felt throughout Liberia; (b) promote and explain the extension services and assistance that the MOA has and offers to the Liberian farmer and how such professional and technical services and inputs can be accessed by the farmer; and (c) inform and educate farmers and the public about the importance of food security and agriculture self-sufficiency—and MOA's Poverty Reduction Strategy and statutory mandates.

Strategy Four: inform and educate the farmers and agriculture workers. The objectives of this strategy are to (a) educate the farmer and make her/him able to understand and apply modern and productive farming techniques, and (b) equip the farmer with the skills she/he needs to be an MOA partner and a farmer leader in her/his community.

Development of the MOA Agro-Communications Strategy has three milestones: (1) preparation of the Needs Assessment Report, (2) development of the Agro-Communications Strategy, and (3) implementation of the Agro-Communications Strategy. The latter milestone has three phases: short, intermediate, and long term. These phases are not necessarily separate and distinct; rather, they are mutually reinforcing and interdependent, and utilize essentially the same channels or tools for communication.

In the research and preparation of this Needs Assessment Report and the companion Agro-Communications Strategy, much has been learned. The MOA faces many daunting challenges—with less visionary and passionate leadership it could be overwhelmed and become mired in minutia. The one bright spot is that the Minister is joined by about 15 percent of her staff in her commitment to transform and lead the Ministry’s reform and change agenda and to make food security and farmer empowerment a reality.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations have been incorporated in this report. It is, however, important to note that this report is only a document. The issues it contains are real and if left unaddressed could potentially undermine agricultural development in Liberia. It is therefore recommended that partners, USAID/ARD, and others remain engaged in assisting the MOA to acquire the professional expertise it needs to lead the implementation of this Agro-Communications Strategy.

1.0 INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS AT THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE

1.1 BACKGROUND

The Ministry of Agriculture was established by an Act of the Liberian Legislature on May 11, 1972. The 1972 Act repealed the 1964 law which created the then Department of Agriculture (DOA), and assigned specific responsibilities to the MOA to: (a) achieve self-sufficiency in food production; (b) increase Liberia's ability to earn and conserve foreign exchange, (c) increase farmers' income and purchasing power, and (d) bring the farmer out of subsistence farming and enable the people and the country to prosper.

The MOA has grown from a small bureaucracy in 1972 to a large public agency. The moribund Agriculture and Cooperative Development Bank (ACDB) and Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) were integral units within the Ministry, but were granted autonomy to enhance service delivery to farmers. Liberia has lived through a period of socio-political upheavals and civil conflicts that have left its institutions, including the MOA, ruined. Yet the Ministry's mandate, while retaining core focus and objectives, has been expanded and given renewed urgency and importance under the government's Poverty Reduction or 'Lift Liberia' Strategy (PRS). Under the PRS (Pillar II, Subsection 7.2, titled —Agriculture and Food Security”), the Ministry of Agriculture is charged with transforming the agriculture sector to achieve eight broad objectives (PRS, GoL, 2006):

- i. Increasing food crop yields by adopting new techniques and technologies;
- ii. Improving access to seeds, fertilizers, and other inputs, and strengthening linkages to output markets, primarily by rebuilding farm-to-market roads;
- iii. Restoring value chains and increasing community and MSME participation in supply and value chains;
- iv. Providing food assistance to vulnerable groups that are severely food insecure;
- v. Strengthening key agricultural institutions that were destroyed during the conflict;
- vi. Slowing the extent of illegal fishing and increasing the value added from catches;
- vii. Slowing deforestation, slash-and-burn cultivation, and tree cutting for firewood and charcoal, which degrade habitats and deplete natural resources; and
- viii. Providing greater opportunities for women and youth in agriculture, especially in the informal sector.

Further, under PRS (Pillar IV, Subsection 9.2, captioned: —Road and Bridges”), feeder and farm to market roads have been recognized as pivotal links for development initiatives in post-conflict Liberia: roads provide access to markets and therefore promote free movement of goods and services, including agricultural produce. Good, all-weather roads are therefore an inducement to farmers to produce more. The MOA recently received a US \$3.1 million grant, which it gave to the Ministry of Public Works (MPW) for the construction of feeder roads. The MOA is working with multilateral and bilateral partners to increase support to farm-to-market road projects.

Increasing agriculture production also requires that the MOA engage in a planned, coordinated, clearly defined, and articulated agriculture extension program with three principal goals: (1) to inform and educate the small farmers and give them the skills and tools to become successful; (2) to change traditional notions and attitudes about farming; and (3) to explain the opportunities and the financial, economic, and social benefits of farming. Central to the achievement of these goals is communication that employs multimedia approaches: traditional/conventional (radio, television, posters, banners, bumper stickers, billboards, video skirts and dramas, etc.), alternative media (i.e., Forum Theater, Haithai Shop discussions, high school 4-H clubs), and new media (i.e., Internet, mobile telephones, and SMS text messaging), among others.

When new leadership was recently installed at the MOA, the need for a communication strategy to undergird the renewed thrust toward the achievement of national food security and promotion of agriculture development became apparent and compelling. It was also recognized that agricultural extension services could not be successfully undertaken without a complementary and robust communication strategy and action plan that supports such efforts. Consequently, the Ministry, through funding provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to support capacity building at the central and field offices, requested that ARD, Inc. facilitate the development of an Agro-Communication Strategy to achieve four objectives:

1. Conduct a needs assessment to analyze intra- and inter-agency communication systems within the MOA while simultaneously ensuring MOA staff’s and stakeholders’ perceptions, expectations, and needs with respect to internal communications and communication between MOA and partners are reflected.
2. Identify communication channels to propagate MOA’s message to its core constituencies, especially the smallholder Liberian farmers, and other stakeholders and beneficiaries.
3. Develop an Agro-Communications Strategy that incorporates a communications flow chart clearly delineating lines of communication within the MOA and between the Ministry and its various stakeholders, and recommend effective implementation guidelines for the new strategy.
4. Develop a MOA Communications Action Plan in line with the Agro-Communications Strategy.

Predicated on the request of MOA, USAID and its implementing partner, ARD, Inc., advertised the consultancy vacancy and subsequently recruited the consultant who commenced work on April 1, 2010.

1.2 NEEDS ASSESSMENT

In furtherance of the tasks, the consultant visited MOA county offices in Bong and Grand Bass counties, as well as local government authorities in these counties, to assess the communications needs of the local offices and their staff. Local and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and partners were also consulted. The tour was intended to provide insight into the level and quality of communications and coordination between MOA and partners on the one hand, and between the MOA and partners and the farmers, on the other hand. Similar consultations were carried out with MOA staff in Monrovia. The Minister, Deputy Ministers, key staff, consultants, and heads of divisions participated. Consultations were

also carried out with representatives of international partner organizations to help determine the quality of existing internal and external communication strategies and channels at the MOA, and identify how such channels are impacted by administrative, operational, and other institutional variables. The assessment further sought to identify administrative and operational challenges that potentially could enhance or impede successful implementation of an Agro-Communication Strategy—and achievement of MOA’s statutory and PRS mandates.

Empirical data, anecdotal and research-based information were gathered, annotated, and stratified. Collectively they show the following:

1.2.1 Internal and External Communication

Intra- or internal communication at the MOA is largely mono-directional and vertical, where and when it occurs. Generally, within the MOA, information is treated as proprietary—and is compartmentalized. Significantly, communication is restricted to the exchange of memoranda or to information sharing at meetings. Within and across departments, responsible authorities are often unaware of program activities or their status.

At the county level, the challenge is the same. County Agricultural Coordinators assert that there have been instances when they have submitted reports to MOA’s central office in Monrovia utilizing the existing administrative chain, only to be queried later for not sending their reports. Similarly, information flow from the central office to county offices is not systematic or continuous. A contributing factor is that the Extension Department is understaffed, overwhelmed, and therefore unable to respond to inquiries or transmit reports and communications in a timely manner.

The current state of communication in the Ministry of Agriculture has been characterized as either “major deficit” or “poor, weak, or non-existent.”

1.2.2 External/Interagency Communication

Communication between MOA and other government agencies such as the Ministries of Gender and Development and Health and Social Welfare, as well as local and international partners, is poor or inadequate in spite of mechanisms such as the monthly Agriculture Coordinating Committee (ACC) meetings or the county-level ACC meetings. Communicating decisions, plans, programs, policies; or merely following up on activities either within the MOA or between the MOA and partners is a challenge. The MOA has embarked on a large-scale transformation of the agriculture sector throughout Liberia. Yet these activities and programs are not clearly, consistently, regularly, and professionally communicated or publicized. When they are publicized, the communications lacks the coherence and promotional elements that enhance understanding and appreciation of MOA’s efforts.

Further, coordination with local and international partners, except at monthly ACC or other similar meetings, is a challenge. Consequently, the farmers—MOA’s most important constituency—are inadequately informed and their concerns insufficiently represented in program planning and implementation. For example, programs designed to enhance agriculture production, such as the Farmer Field School (FFS) which teaches local farmers new, more productive, and environmentally friendly farming methods, encounter farmer resistance because of poor information dissemination and education. As a result, farmers remain wedded to the traditional, back-breaking, shifting cultivation methods.

Moreover, as a result of poor communication and inadequate information sharing, there is much duplication in service delivery and capacity-building initiatives in the agriculture sector. For example, the Ministries of Gender and Development and Health and Social Welfare have assumed responsibilities to

work directly with farmers although they have neither the knowledge and skills nor the capacity to engage in service delivery to farmers. Four questions arise in this regard: could resources which these agencies administer be pooled and allocated to the Ministry of Agriculture which has the statutory responsibility and the institutional capacity to carry out such functions on behalf of the government? Where is the economics of skills? How well are farmers served with such competing programs? How are the real needs and concerns of the farmers reflected in these programs?

1.2.3 The Communications Division

The Communications Division is the heart of MOA's public information dissemination and education programs. The name however is a misnomer, because the 'division' is only a shell of what it was in prior years. Currently, there are only five people in the section. The emphasis here is really on the number, because if these five were optimally qualified and experienced and possessed requisite capacity and equipment, they could carry out the responsibilities of the communications section by adequately informing and educating the public on the policies, programs, and activities of the Ministry.

Regrettably, the division does not have appropriate staff with requisite education, knowledge, and skills nor the experience to manage an effective, dynamic, creative, aggressive, and proactive public information program for an agency with a mandate that is critical to overall national peace, security, and stability. The highest level of education among the staff is a bachelor's degree in Mass Communication with no external training or exposure to professional best practice and activities. The staff is lethargic, unimaginative, and seems to possess little sense of one of the most critical elements of news: timeliness. News stories are as late as a week. Often, too, they lack the elements of good, professional journalism. Except for a consultant—a former director of the section who was retired and rehired—the 'division' lacks any capacity, human and resource, to carry out the responsibilities of a modern public information office of an important national agency such as the MOA, and is unable to advocate on behalf of programs that it ought to undertake to advance the MOA's public information, education, and mass mobilization agenda.

1.2.4 Divisions of the Ministry of Agriculture

There are five principal divisions within the Ministry of Agriculture: Administration; Extension, Regional Development and Research; Policy, Economic Analysis and Planning; Technical Services; and Livestock. The Central Agricultural Research Institute (CARI) is semi-autonomous, while Fisheries also functions as a quasi-autonomous division. A review of data and research reports, as well as anecdotal information shows that all divisions are burdened by similar challenges:

Administration: a July 2008 assessment report prepared by TASMOA (p.7) states that the "Division's capacity to deliver improved HR management services in MOA shows that it is very weak, both in terms of functions and staff". The TASMOA report further states that the "...urrent operations of the Divisions are primarily transactional rather than strategic in nature". Staff morale is low. A palpable sense of indifference permeates the administrative chain at MOA with about 10 to 15 percent of staff capable of carrying out assignments, according to data and staff statements. Staff meetings are infrequent; only four meetings have been held since the new Minister assumed office nearly a year ago. Staff explained that senior officers have often appeared uninformed about the activities of their divisions, and deferred to their subordinates to provide briefings on divisional activities at meetings. In addition, because communication is poor and limited, staff seems to feel left out or marginalized. Marginalization and lack of communication and information sharing seem to lead to the atmosphere of apathy at MOA.

Further, there is much staff in-fighting at MOA, bred by ambition for power, job insecurity, and distrust. Consequently, only a few dedicated staff, supported by international partners, including TASMOA, is saddled with the responsibility of driving MOA's reform agenda and fulfilling its statutory and PRS mandates.

CARI: is the research center of the MOA. It is expected to engage in agriculture research in the area of improved rice seed multiplication and provision of pre-certified seeds to farmers. CARI is expected to be the technical and professional center where scientists are fully engaged in agriculture research designed to enhance MOA service delivery and technical inputs to farmers. Currently, however, CARI is anything but a quiet place of research. There is in-fighting, power struggles, and distrust. The staff is not communicating. When they do talk, they speak at, instead of to, each other. There are independent and empirical reports of centralization of power and authority, and broken, seemingly irreparable, trust. The rhetorical question, of course, is, how can meaningful and beneficial research be undertaken when researchers do not communicate, or are focused on minor administrative issues? A few senior scientists, including the Director-General of the Institute continue to work to rebuild CARI and enhance its technical capacity and resources.

Regional Development, Research, and Extension: this is MOA's link to the farmer. It has good leadership, but has limited human and material resources. It is just beginning to build its structure, and therefore lacks the capacity to reach farmers across the nation. In fact, a senior officer of this division acknowledged that everything was in "limbo". Roles and structures are not clearly defined, and as a result, there is duplication. There is also confusion because staff does not understand their roles and responsibilities. There is doubt regarding the difference between research and extension—and between CARI, the bio-science research center, and the applied research functions of this division. As in general administration, a few staff in this division are overwhelmed. Consequently, CACs, District Agricultural Officers (DAOs), and farmers do not receive timely information. For example, rice seeds intended to reach farmers during the planting season arrived much later and could not be used. Communications from CACs to the central office do not reach intended recipients.

Each of the situations outlined above accentuate the need for a clear definition of communication at MOA. Although they point to different communication needs, when resolved, they can enhance overall internal and external communication.

Other administrative, operational, and communication challenges have been articulated and documented in several previous reports, including recent assessment reports prepared and submitted by TASMOA. However, they are cited only within the context of the impact that they have on current and future communication strategies.

Particular attention is paid to the Extension Division because it is the most important link that the MOA has to the farmers who are the driving force toward achievement of the statutory and PRS mandates of the Ministry. There are huge communication challenges between the Extension Division at the central office and county offices. Under the Ministry's new leadership, however, improvements are being made. The primary difficulty farmers have encountered year after year is the documented late arrival of seeds to their various locations. Funding has been cited as the underlying factor, but that excuse, while valid, does not negate the larger issue of the challenge of planning and prioritization. The overarching question is where is the plan? Where is the schedule? Why would MOA send rice seeds when the planting season is about to end? What does MOA want farmers to do with seeds when they cannot plant them—eat them? What medical or other harm would happen to a farmer when she or he eats chemically treated rice seeds?

Another challenge within the Extension Division is that because it is understaffed and overwhelmed, it is unable to focus on and adequately address the concerns of farmers nationwide. It has also been unable to work with the Communications Division or vice versa to adequately inform and educate farmers on new programs and new skills and to factor into the planning process that one size does not fit all; every farmer

does not share common concerns and common problems. Cultural differences exist in agricultural practices throughout Liberia.

1.2.5 Human Resources

The most compelling challenge facing the MOA is in the area of its human resources. Some senior officers estimate that only 10 percent of the labor force of the Ministry works and can be relied upon to meet their deliverables. Empirically, it was observed that the MOA is burdened by a serious staff morale problem that could potentially threaten its ability to fulfill its statutory mandate and PRS deliverables. In conversations, some individuals are often more critical about what should or should not be done instead of offering constructive suggestions on how to become actively engaged in collectively carrying out the mandates of the MOA. Because a number of the individuals who engage in such criticisms are political appointees, the leadership of the Ministry seems unable to act in a way that would engender a renewed sense of commitment and urgency about the challenges it faces.

The staff is generally indifferent and apathetic—possibly due to a lack of understanding of roles and responsibilities, as well as a general disinterest in the work of the Ministry. Consequently, supervision of line staff is superficial at best and at worst minimum. Divisional heads often are not *au courant* with programs and activities either within their divisions, or across MOA. Coordination is limited and each divisional head seems unaware of developments within his or her division—or within the Ministry. In fact, the general administrative structure of MOA seems to be in flux and disconnected from developments in the frontline of the Ministry's statutory functions.

2.0 AGRO-COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

Strategic communication has four critical pillars: (1) it should communicate a purposeful and coherent message; (2) it should clearly define its target audience; (3) it should identify clear, realistic, achievable goals and objectives; and (4) it should be dynamic, multi-layered, engaging, and proactive.

The MOA has three core constituencies, the Liberian farmer being the principal. The other two constituencies are the Government of Liberia and the Liberian public; and national and international donors, and development and implementing partners.

The goal of agro-communication, in the words of Dr. Florence A. Chenoweth, is to make Liberian agriculture “21st century” by — taking a non-farmer and turning her into a successful farmer.” ARD’s Chief of Party, Dr. Wilbur G. Thomas, also in a recent statement characterized agriculture as being “broad, and basic”. Agriculture provides the main livelihood for about 75 percent of Liberia’s population of 3.5 million; 65 percent of agriculture workers are women. Further, a substantial number of Liberian farmers are subsistence farmers hooked on pre-industrial-age farming methods. The Minister’s goal is achievable, however. The MOA is also mandated to achieve both the PRS goal of leading the efforts to create food security in Liberia while simultaneously pursuing its statutory mandate.

The new vision of the leadership at the Ministry, which is to focus on farmers, can therefore only enhance the accomplishment of these mandates, because when a non-farmer becomes a successful farmer, the food security need of Liberia will be met, and the statutory goal of earning and conserving foreign exchange also fulfilled.

The challenge however lies in this question: how can the MOA turn a non-farmer into a successful, “21st century” farmer? The answer lies in a new approach to agro-communication. Communication, in general, is the heart of every institution. Like the human heart, if it does not work or function adequately, the body falls ill, and left untreated, it perishes. With respect to communication in general, and more specifically, strategic agro-communication, the MOA is not functioning normally or adequately: on paper and in the field, a great deal has been achieved and is being undertaken and touted in private conversations by actors and beneficiaries. Unfortunately, little, if anything, is heard about wide-ranging transformative initiatives and reforms that are being undertaken by the MOA.

The question therefore is, why? Bluntly, the Ministry has no communication operation, agro- and non-agro. Consequently, an MOA Agro-Communications Strategy will be anchored in the following strategic initiatives:

1. **Realign and strengthen Internal and External Communications channels and linkages.** There is need for a drastic overhaul of the internal and external communications channels and processes of the Ministry. As shown in Appendix I, internal communication is currently vertical or top down with little or inadequate lateral or horizontal communication taking place. Externally, communication between MOA and other government agencies and donors and implementing partners is weak (also shown in Appendix I). The strategy outlined below focuses on tools or channels that can be utilized to address the internal and external communication imbalances to create a sense of cohesion, collaboration, team spirit, and shared vision and responsibility.

2. **Rebrand and Reposition the Ministry of Agriculture.** The primary objective will be to promote MOA's vision and mission; proactively and aggressively tell MOA's success story; inform and educate the public and stakeholders about the achievements of the Ministry; and inform and educate farmers—the Ministry's principal target audience—of the new direction being pursued, new farming methods, and technical and resource support available through MOA as the lead agency and coordinator, through partners.

3. **Restructure Communications Division.** Is the communication unit a division? Are there several units? Does a five-person staff constitute a "division"? More importantly, the name of the department needs to be professionally aligned with the names of similar departments engaged in public communications activities in other government agencies, as well as externally. The overarching purpose of restructuring the Communications Division will be to recruit trained, qualified, creative, dynamic, capable, and professional journalists versed in public communications and who clearly understand the vision and mission of MOA and possess the skills and knowledge to work to ensure understanding, appreciation, support, and acceptance of the reform and change agenda and the achievements of the Ministry. Therefore, several proposals are advanced to reclassify and restructure the Communications Division. They are:
 - a. Reclassify the division to a Bureau of Public Affairs and Information Services;
 - b. Required Personnel: Director of Public Affairs – 1; Assistant Director of Public Affairs – 1; Chief of Information, Communication and Technology Services – 1; Publications Specialist – 1; Public Affairs Officers – 3; IT Technician – 1; Webmaster – 1; Compugrapher – 1; Secretary – 1; Driver – 1; and Office Assistant – 1.
 - c. Functions (Reporting Chain): the Public Affairs and Information Services Bureau will report directly to the Minister of Agriculture or her/his designee. It will have a cross-cutting role and functions affecting all departments of the MOA, as well as the Ministry's relationship with other government agencies and local and international partners. It will be the public face of the MOA and the link to the media, both foreign and domestic, and will maintain friendly contacts with all sections of the media at all times. It will conceive, plan, and implement communications programs and activities geared toward rebranding and repositioning the MOA. Such programs will include radio and television, visual communication tools (bulletin boards, billboards, bumper stickers, and posters, etc.), newsletters, magazines, and new communication tools, including a nationwide Internet link between MOA and county offices, SMS messaging, etc.). It will carry out information and education programs in both print and electronic media to inform, educate, motivate, and mobilize MOA's various constituent groups, including the farmers, donor partners, and local and international implementing partners. It will undertake programs that ensure visibility for the MOA; and it will market the policies, programs, and services of the MOA to the Government of Liberia, the Liberian public, and international donor and local partners.
 - d. Regionalization of Country for Agro-Communications: it is proposed that the 15 counties of Liberia be regionalized for purposes of establishing the framework for effective, proactive, and sustained dissemination of agro-information and two-way farmer education and communication, as follows:
 - i. Region I: Montserrado, Bomi, Grand Cape Mount, and Gbarpolu. A Public Affairs Officer will coordinate and ensure that all agro-related activities in this region are reported in the media and that pronouncements, policies, regulations, programs, etc. are disseminated to farmers and partners in these five counties. The Public Affairs Officer will also maintain routine contacts with the CACs in these counties—and conduct regular familiarization and information-gathering visits to the region.

- ii. Region II: Nimba, Lofa, Bong, Margibi, Grand Bassa, and River Cess. A Public Affairs Officer will similarly perform duties as the Public Affairs Officer in Region I above.
- iii. Region III: Grand Gedeh, Maryland, Sinoe, Grand Kru, and River Gee. A Public Affairs Officer will to perform the same duties as Public Affairs Officers in Regions I and II above.

4. **Qualifications of personnel**

Director: A master’s degree in Mass Communications or in History, Political Science, Government, Sociology or in any other social science area.

Assistant Director: A bachelor’s degree, Master’s degree preferred, in Mass Communications in any of the Social Sciences; if only a bachelor’s degree holder, the candidate must have not less than five years of experience working actively with the media at a similar level of responsibility.

Chief of ICT Services: A bachelor’s degree in communication and information technology fields with not less than five years experience in comparable managerial role.

Public Affairs Officers: A bachelor’s degree in Journalism or Mass Communications with a minimum of three years of active experience in public relations in a corporate, non-profit or government institution.

Publications Specialist: A master’s degree in Mass Communications with at least five years active experience working as an editor on a newspaper or magazine or in the news department of a radio or television station. If the candidate is only a bachelor’s degree holder, she or he must have not less than 10 years of active experience working as a magazine or newspaper editor.

Compugrapher: Must possess a diploma or certificate in Computer Science with at least three years of experience working with a print media institution or a printing press.

Webmaster: Minimum of a bachelor’s degree in Computer Science with specialization in web design and management and two years of active experience working in similar position in either the private or public sector.

5. **Equipment.** For the new bureau to effectively and adequately carry out its mandate, the staff should be provided the requisite operational equipment:

Mobile Equipment: 1 four-wheel drive jeep for general utility and country-wide travel, and 1 standard sedan for utility use by staff of the bureau.

Professional Equipment: digital cameras –3 units, video cameras – 3 units; miniature cassette recorders – 5; medium-sized cassette recorders – 3; desktop computers – 4 and laptop computers – 4. Each piece of equipment should have accessories, including stock of batteries, film, and chips.

2.1 **MOA AGRO-COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY**

The core focus of MOA’s Agro-Communication Strategy is to “take a non-farmer and turn her or him into a successful farmer”, and thereby achieve food security in Liberia. Consequently, the Agro-Communication Strategy presented in Appendix II to this document provides tools and steps that can be pursued to achieve the goal of reaching the farmer regardless of location. The strategy therefore utilizes multimedia approaches as defined in the matrixes presented in Appendix II.

2.2 MOA AGRO-COMMUNICATIONS ACTION PLAN

A strategy evolves out of high-level thinking and ideas, and is intended to address specific concerns of change, renewal, and institutional strengthening. In fact, reform, change, and transformation cannot occur without ideas, a road map, determination, and commitment.

The Agro-Communications Action Plan presented in Appendix III is designed to provide the road map and schedule to guide and assist the MOA as it implements the various elements of the proposed Agro-Communications Strategy. It covers all areas of the first and intermediate phases of the strategy, from the small doable activities to the more complex and comprehensive. It also clearly identifies expected outcomes—and responsibilities of the Ministry staff responsible for ensuring that each task is accomplished.

3.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 CONCLUSION

The Ministry of Agriculture has many daunting challenges: administrative, operational, staff morale, capacity, resources, farming communities wedded to antiquated agriculture practices and resistant to change and reform, and outdated institutions and infrastructure. But none of these challenges compares in severity and complexity to the most important asset that could enhance the Ministry's capacity to carry out its reform agency and meet its PRS and statutory goals: the grave communication challenges across the spectrum of MOA—at the senior staff level, between senior staff and line staff, between the central office and county offices, between the Ministry and local and international implementing partners, and even between the Ministry and other government agencies. Internal communication is vertical when it occurs, not lateral or horizontal. Communication moves at a snail's pace when it happens. Information is regarded as proprietary and treated exclusively within domain. Communications between MOA and other institutions are irregular or sporadic. Change and reform cannot and will not be successfully engineered and executed by MOA unless the communication malaise that afflicts the Ministry is confronted and removed through wholesale restructuring of the Communications Division. There is no doubt that the new leadership of the MOA recognizes this blunt truth. It was clearly articulated by the Minister and other senior authorities in conversations on the subject.

This Needs Assessment Report and accompanying Agro-Communications Strategy has attempted to identify critical challenges confronting the Ministry across its entire spectrum and identify solutions, because inefficient communication or failure to communicate in any one section of the Ministry affects overall communication in the Ministry. The Agro-Communications Strategy proposed based on this Needs Assessment Report, the core of which has been captured in the matrix on communication framework, contains specific and strategic approaches to obliterating the communications deficits.

3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ministry of Agriculture is on the threshold of unprecedented reform and change. To succeed, the leadership has to communicate its vision of the direction and objectives of its reform and change agenda. Communication programs that enable the leadership to implement its programs and policies are lacking. The following recommendations are proposed to address the key conclusions reached in this report:

1. Reclassify and restructure the Communications Division and hire new, more qualified personnel to effectively carry out the responsibility of the MOA's public information and education programs.
2. To guide the speedy implementation of the Agro-Communication Strategy, MOA should consider working with international partners to engage the services of a consultant to work with the new Bureau of Public Affairs and Information Services to operationalize the strategies outlined in this report.

APPENDIX I: COMMUNICATIONS PATTERNS AND FLOW CHARTS

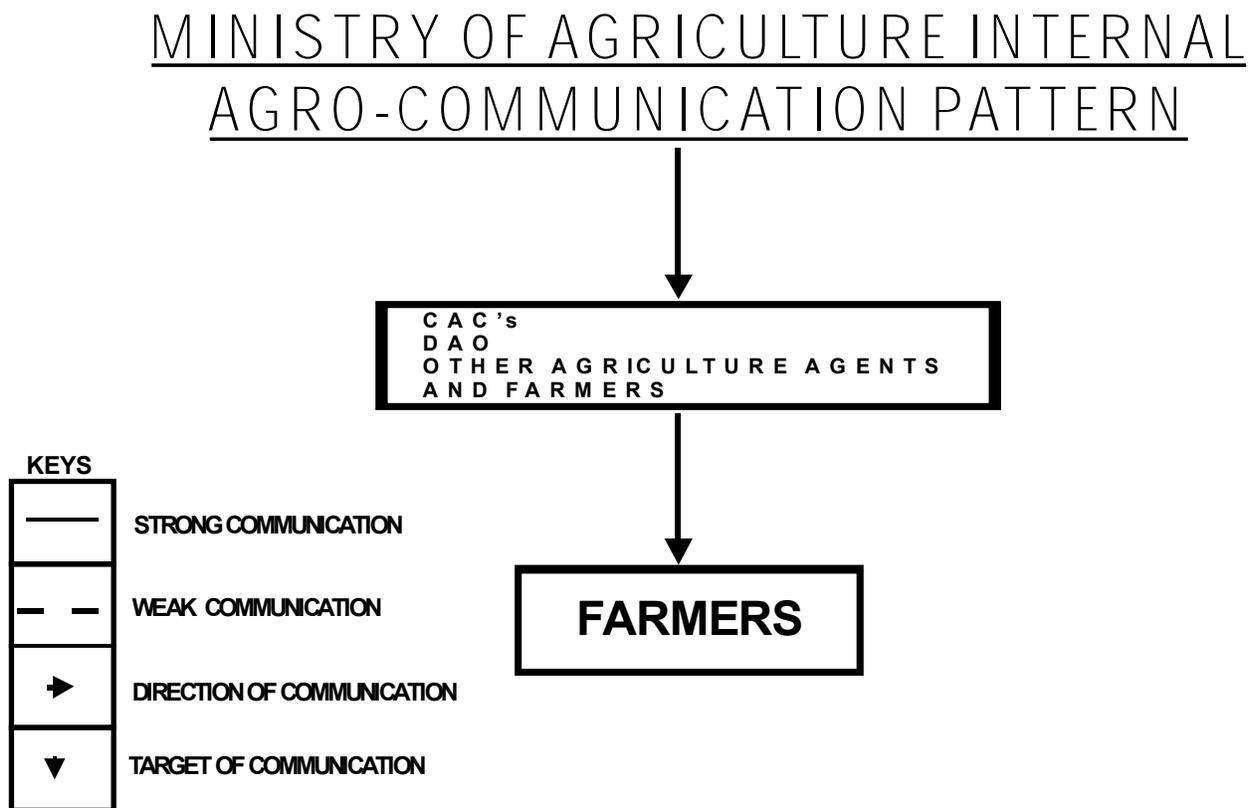


Figure 1

AGRO-COMMUNICATION CURRENT INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FLOW CHART

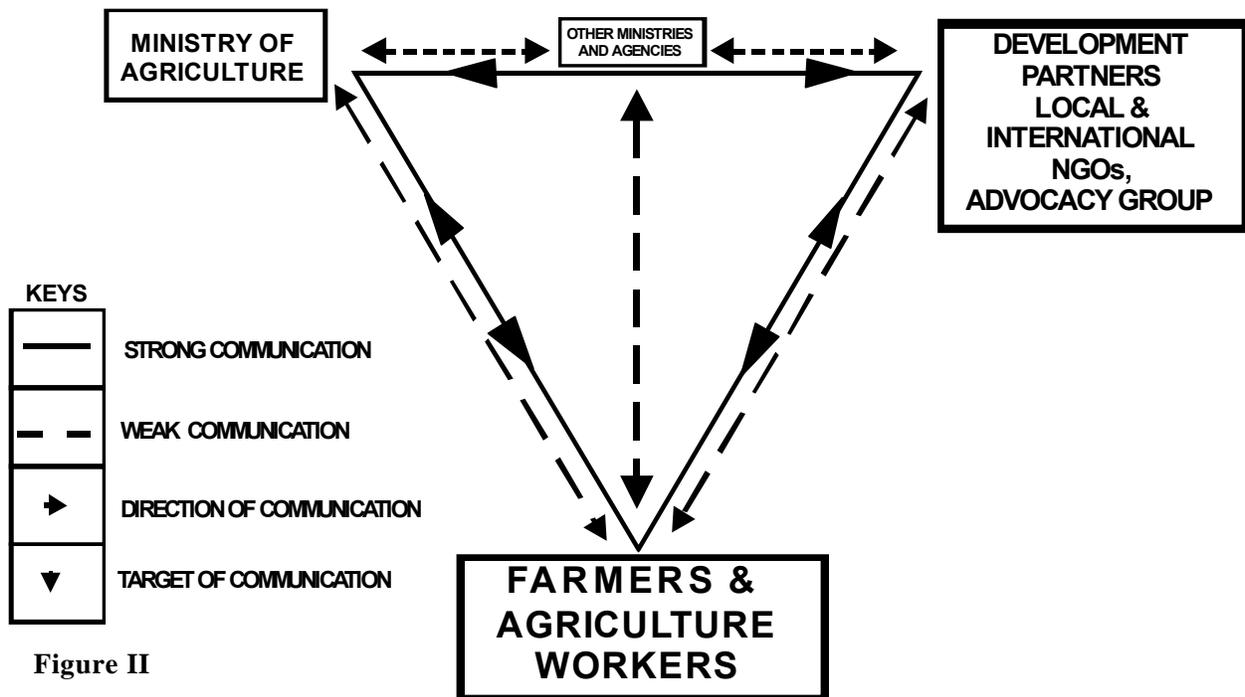


Figure II

AGRO-COMMUNICATION PROPOSED FLOW CHART

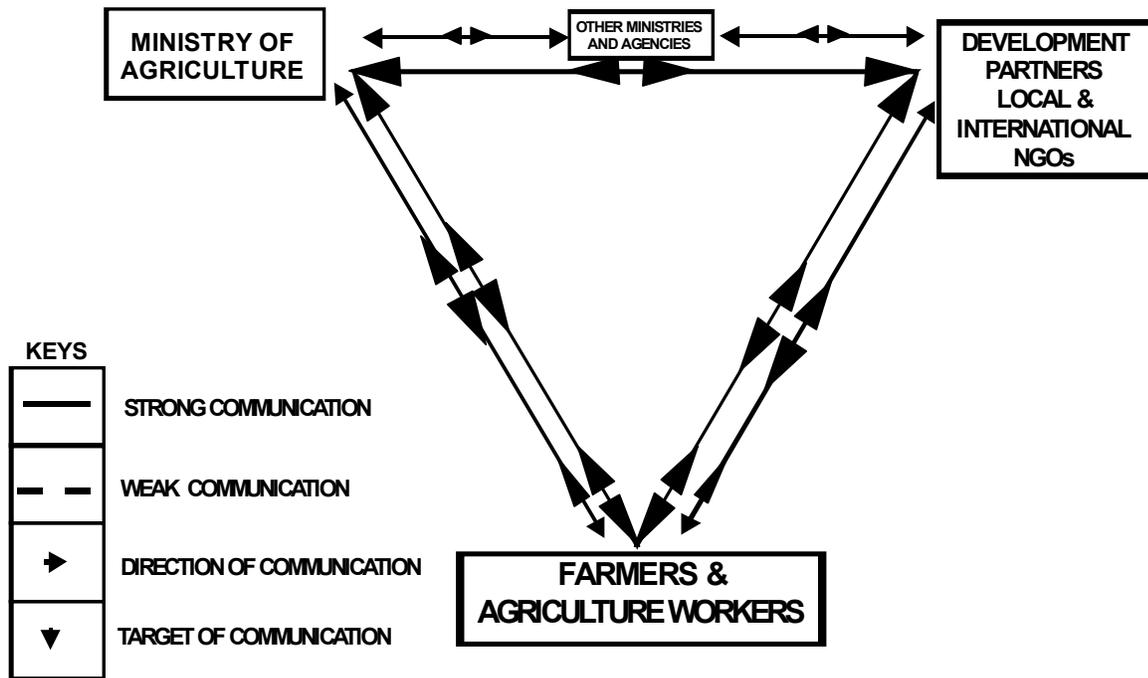
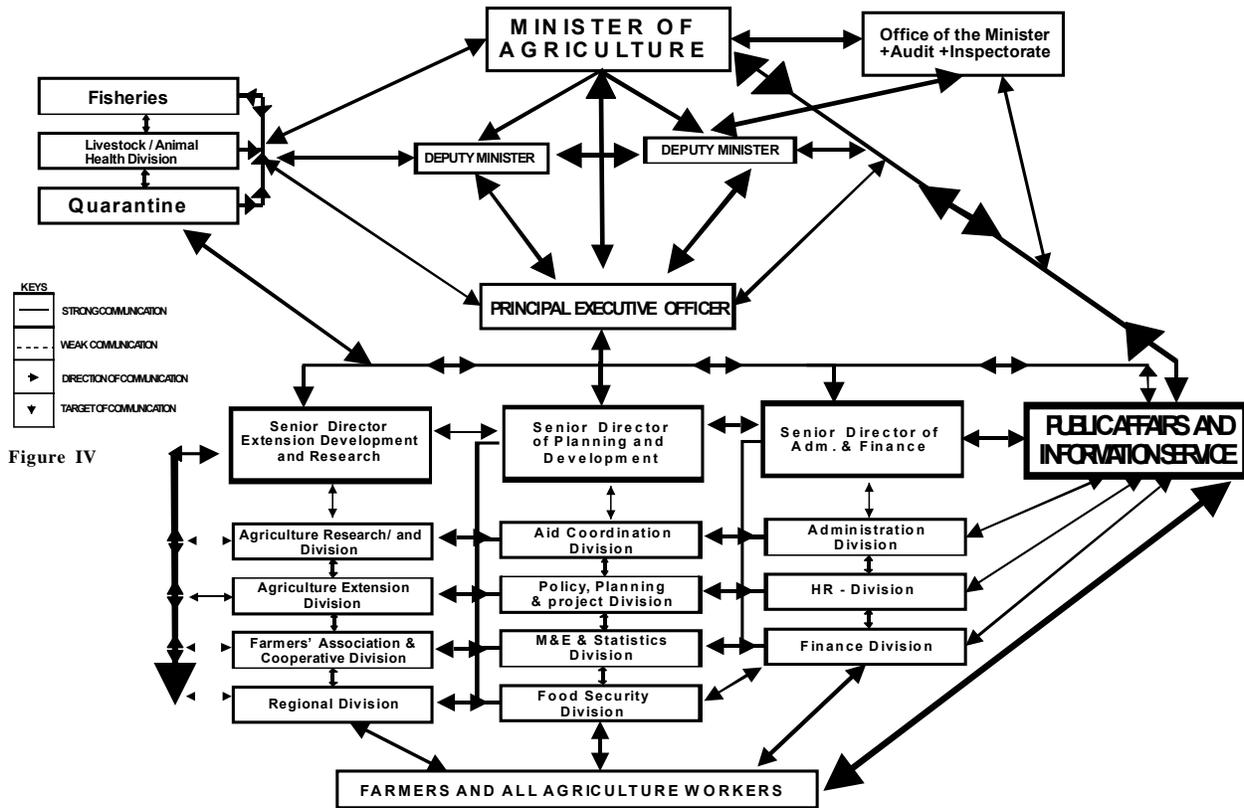


Figure III

NEW INTERNAL MOA'S COMMUNICATION FLOW CHART



APPENDIX II: MOA AGRO-COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

MATRIX I: COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Core objective: Enhance Internal and External Communication Channels and Linkages

No	Activity	Description	Target Audience	Medium of Communication	Expected Outcome(s)	Timeline	Frequency	Accountability
1	Construction of Bulletin Boards at central and county offices.	Bulletin boards are an important tool for information dissemination to staff and the public. They should be built and erected at central and county offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff • Partners • Public 	Bulletin Boards	Inform and educate staff and public about activities and programs of MOA	30 May 2010	To be updated weekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MOA Administration • Bureau of Public Affairs & Information Services • CACs
2.	Weekly Ministerial Council Meeting	A good and informed management team builds and strengthens institutions and drives reform. Regular exchange of information and discussions about challenges and projects are a critical piece to effective team leadership. A weekly meeting of the Minister and her team is key to this activity. Such meetings provide forums for review and evaluation of activities and programs and the setting of priorities.	Assistant and Deputy Ministers	Ministerial Council Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds team spirit • Strengthens professional solidarity and social bond • Forges and fosters unity among senior officers • Creates a sense of shared responsibility • Provides forum for program and activity review and adjustments; accountability; planning, and prioritization 	15 May 2010	Weekly Ministerial Council Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief of Staff to the Minister • Deputy Minister for Administration

No	Activity	Description	Target Audience	Medium of Communication	Expected Outcome(s)	Timeline	Frequency	Accountability
3	General Staff Meeting	The general staff is the foot-soldier upon whom management depends to implement programs and activities and achieve institutional goals. Staff inputs into programming and policy formulation create ownership, responsibility, and a sense of recognition.	General staff	General staff meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates understanding • Minimizes rumor and activities counterproductive to institutional growth and achievement of objectives • Creates recognition and participation • Creates shared responsibility • Enhances morale and support 	31 May 2010		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief of Staff • Deputy Minister for Administration • Principal Director for Administration • Director of Public Affairs
4	Ministerial and Senior Directors' Retreat	MOA is embarked on implementing a reform and change agenda. Success of this agenda depends on staff understanding, perception, and acceptance. A retreat that brings together the Minister, all other Ministers and senior directors and facilitated by TASMOA will create understanding and shared ownership of reform and change agenda, and provide a forum to clarify all questions and concerns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministers • Senior Directors 	A three-day retreat (Friday – Sunday) at a venue to be determined by MOA in consultation with facilitator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates cordiality and team cohesion • Creates understanding of reform and change agenda • Reduces anxiety and concerns • Creates shared ownership • Creates accountability and responsibility 	Monthly	Quarterly Senior Staff Retreat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minister • Chief of Staff • Deputy Ministers for Administration and Planning • Director of Public Affairs
5	Monthly status report on budget implementation and information sharing on status report to ministers and senior directors	Staff involvement in MOA's budget process should extend beyond preparatory phase into budget implementation at divisional & departmental levels. This ensures budget is tied to programs and projects; that funds are utilized to conform to budget requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministers • Comptroller • Directors • Staff • Public 	Fiscal budget Ministerial Council Budget Implementation meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shares budget information upon approval • Ensures budget is implemented in keeping with approved line items • Removes potential for abuse and misapplication of funds • Creates ownership and accountability 	15 June 2010	Monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minister • Deputy Minister for Administration • Principal Director of Administration • Comptroller

No	Activity	Description	Target Audience	Medium of Communication	Expected Outcome(s)	Timeline	Frequency	Accountability
6	Development of ICT and e-communication system	Reform and change cannot be useful without sustained information dissemination. Further, information sharing between MOA and its county and extension officers as well as donor and implementing partners is critical to forging collaboration and understanding. MOA's website is irregularly updated; a revamped Public Affairs Bureau should improve this, and establish a networking and e-communication system that is easily accessible by field workers and partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MOA Staff • Donor and implementing partners • County authorities • Farmers • Public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Network and Internet Connectivity and other forms of e-communication (SMS messaging, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates easy access to information • Improves understanding • Enhances two-way communication flow (sender to receiver and feedback) 	1 July 2010	Daily e-letter to field workers and partners and website update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minister of Agriculture • Chief of Staff • Deputy Minister of Extension • Deputy Minister for Planning • Webmaster • Director of Public Affairs and Information Services
7	Construction of "suggestion box"	Staff and public inputs into program planning and implementation enhance chances of support and cooperation, because it creates a sense of pride, participation, and ownership. Further, communication occurs only when there is feedback, because communication is always simplistically a two-way activity. Building and installing suggestion boxes in strategic locations at MOA's central and county offices and encouraging staff and the public to use them will enhance a new spirit of inclusion and communication—and improve the working climate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff • Public 	Suggestion boxes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates opportunity for two-way communication (sender, receiver back to sender) • Improves climate by creating sense of ownership and pride • Enhances inputs into programs and policies and increases chances of success • Promotes advocacy by widening ownership and responsibility for success 	15 May 2010 – 31 August 2010	Weekly collection and review of contents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration • Public Affairs and Information Services

No	Activity	Description	Target Audience	Medium of Communication	Expected Outcome(s)	Timeline	Frequency	Accountability
8	Development of MOA's weekly or monthly program and activity planner and display on a bulletin board in the conference room and MOA's county offices	A weekly or monthly planner clearly developed, circulated, and prominently displayed at the central and county offices and copies displayed on bulletin boards with dates, outcomes, and implementing authority.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministerial team led by Minister and Deputy Minister for Planning Deputy Minister for Research, Development and Extension COS Assistant Minister for Planning 	Agency Weekly Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates structure and a system of accountability Monitors, evaluates, and makes adjustments programs and activities 	15 May 2010	Weekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chief of Staff Planning Department Extension Department Administration COS Monitoring and Evaluation personnel
9	Quarterly interagency and partner meeting	Senior-level consultative meeting chaired by Minister or designee—separate and distinct from ACC meetings and should be attended by agency heads and heads of international and national partner organizations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MOA, other government agencies National and international partner organizations 	Consultative forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Harmonizes program planning & coordination to avoid duplication Resolves conflicting role issues Maximizes comparative advantage Enhances partnership and cooperation 	31 May 2010	Quarterly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chief of Staff Deputy Minister for Planning Deputy Minister for Administration

MATRIX II: COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

B. Two core objectives and activities:

- (1) Reorganize —Division of Communications” to make it structurally and professionally efficient and capacitated to inform and educate key constituencies of the Ministry of Agriculture, while simultaneously explaining Ministry’s reform and change agenda to engender understanding and cooperation – and enlist support and participation.
- (2) A create a new bureau that is capable of informing and educating ordinary subsistent Liberian farmer to empower her to become a 21st Century successful farmer capacitated and skilled in the use of appropriate technology and new agriculture techniques, and aware of the transformative and change agenda of the Ministry and his role in furthering the agenda.

No	Activity	Description	Target Audience/ Beneficiary/ Beneficiaries	Medium/Media of Communications	Expected Outcome(s)	Timeline	Frequency	Accountability
1	Reclassification of Communications Division	The “Division” will be reclassified and renamed as the Bureau of Public Affairs and Information Services. The new name conforms to the new image and expanded responsibilities of the Bureau.	Division of Communications	Administrative action and decision	Creates professional communications outfit staffed with capable personnel able to rebrand MOA, market its reform & change agenda, and inform and educate Liberian farmers to make them more productive and self-reliant	30 May 2010	One time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minister of Agriculture • Deputy Minister for Administration • Principal Director for Administration • Civil Service Agency

No	Activity	Description	Target Audience/ Beneficiary/ Beneficiaries	Medium/Media of Communications	Expected Outcome(s)	Timeline	Frequency	Accountability
2	Restructure personnel*	Restructure and create a more functional and professional qualified and capable staff: (Director – 1; Assistant Director – 1; Chief of ICT Services – 1; Publications Specialist – 1; Public Affairs Officer – 3; IT Technician – 1; Webmaster – 1; Compugrapher – 1; Secretary – 1; Driver – 1; Office Assistant – 1).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff of division • CACs and DAOs • County Authorities • Other GOL Agencies • Partners • Media 	Administrative action and decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates more responsive and effective in-house public affairs and media organization • Creates internal capacity deal with internal/external media challenges • Creates qualified staff able to market MOA reform and change agenda • Establishes a clear delineation of functions and responsibilities to enhance accountability & efficiency 	30 May – 30 August 2010	One time; periodic or quarterly performance review may lead to personnel adjustment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minister of Agriculture • Deputy Minister of Agriculture • Chief of Staff • Bureau of Public Affairs • Principal Director of Administration

No	Activity	Description	Target Audience/ Beneficiary/ Beneficiaries	Medium/Media of Communications	Expected Outcome(s)	Timeline	Frequency	Accountability
3	Regionalization or Stratification of 15 counties into three Regional Information Zones	To create effective, proactive, and sustained dissemination of agro-communication and farm education, Liberia is divided into three agro-information or communication zones: Region I: Montserrado, Bomi, Grand Cape Mount, and Gbarpolu; Region II: Nimba, Lofa, Bong, Margibi, Grand Bassa, and River Cess; and Region III: Grand Gedeh, Maryland, Sinoe, Grand Kru, and River Gee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff of Public Affairs and Information Services Bureau • CACs and DAOs • Implementing Partners 	Administrative actions and decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates media structure to provide focused attention to agriculture activities nationwide & publicizes activities in media • Creates active structure that is engaged in farmer information dissemination/ education; collects & provides feedback to policymakers and implementing partners • Creates a center to serve as databank for information on current, national agricultural activities 	1 July 2010	One time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minister of Agriculture • Deputy Minister for Administration • Bureau of Public Affairs and Information Services

*Qualifications and functions of personnel of new Bureau of Public Affairs and Information Services are contained in comprehensive Needs Assessment Report.

MATRIX III: COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

C. Core objectives and activities:

Rebranding, repositioning, and make MOA visible and felt throughout Liberia

Promote and explain the extension services and assistance that MOA has and offers to the Liberian farmers and how such professional and technical services and inputs can be accessed by the farmer

Inform and educate farmers and the public about the importance of food security and agriculture self-sufficiency and the Poverty Reduction Strategy and Statutory Mandates of MOA

No	Activity	Description	Target Audience	Medium of Communication	Expected Outcome(s)	Timeline	Frequency	Accountability
1	Visibility	Produce bumper stickers, banners, posters, etc. with catchy, promotional and motivational slogans, distributed nationwide and placed strategically.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers • Public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Print, non-conventional: motorists, local community leaders. • National Radio and TV stations • Community-based Radio stations (CBRs) 	Education, popularity, familiarization, and information	1 July 2010	Quarterly	Public Affairs

No	Activity	Description	Target Audience	Medium of Communication	Expected Outcome(s)	Timeline	Frequency	Accountability
2	Rebranding/ Repositioning MOA	Senior MOA officers (Minister, Deputy Ministers, Consultants) appear on radio and TV programs to explain new vision, mission and mandate—and progress in achieving PRS and statutory mandates; contributions of donor partners and local and international collaborating partners, etc.; interviews recorded and played on community radio stations; national radio and television stations. Edited and produced into five-minute motivational statements by MOA and played on CBR with translation and broadcast in local vernaculars.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public • International multilateral and bilateral partners • Farmers nationwide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National radio and TV stations; • CBRs; • Video Clubs; • Mobile Cassette Vendors • Daily Talk (Bulletin – Airfield junction) • Haithai shops appearances by key staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater public knowledge of MOA's efforts and achievements • Improved image • Greater knowledge of the professional and technical services MOA offers 	15 May 2010	Bi-weekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief of Staff • Public Affairs

No	Activity	Description	Target Audience	Medium of Communication	Expected Outcome(s)	Timeline	Frequency	Accountability
3	Popularization and understanding and acceptance of new agriculture concepts and practices (FFS, etc.)	Agriculture practices are changing from traditional production methods to mechanization. This involves change for farmers, who are generally uneducated, and reluctant to abandon traditional methods, and must be weaned from old habits to new, more productive agriculture activities. MOA will introduce new programs and farming methodologies. To popularize and create acceptance by farmers and the public, alternative media such as musical and theater groups should be utilized, i.e., Julie Endee's group, Flomo Theater/Forum Theater (Peter Ballah), (dramas in Liberian English).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local farmers • Public • GoL • Partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Musical groups • Drama and Theater groups • Simple Liberian English presenters • Lead farmers program • CBRs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Popularizes new programs, policies, and farming initiatives • Creates acceptance of new initiatives and programs • Creates momentum and sustainability 	1 July 2010	Monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Affairs and Information Services • Deputy Minister for Extension • Director of Extension • CARI • CACs • DAOs • Agriculture agents

No	Activity	Description	Target Audience	Medium of Communication	Expected Outcome(s)	Timeline	Frequency	Accountability
4	Development, broadcast, print and circulation of short, pointed messages on programs, policies, and activities of MOA	MOA will develop short, focused and targeted messages to promote and sustain interest in agriculture and MOA's change and reform agenda. One-, two-, or three-minute messages by the Minister, others at MOA, and agriculture-related messages by the President on the importance of agriculture to national independence and wealth creation should be directed at farmers nationwide and groups involved in agriculture. They should focus on major policies, programs, and initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers • Extension and other agriculture workers • International and national partners • Public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National radio stations • CBRs • Video clubs • Lead Farmers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion and sales • Popularization • Motivation and encouragement 	1 August 2010	Quarterly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minister • Chief of Staff • Deputy Minister for ERD • Director of Extension • CACs • Public Affairs Bureau • CARI
5	Create an MOA-wide Text Messaging program to reach farmers nationwide	MOA will utilize a text messaging system (SMS) provided by GSM service providers to reach a wider range of the population with information and to receive unvarnished feedback on policy and program impact and acceptance by target communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public • Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and other advocate groups • Farmers 	GSM service providers	Creates a medium of direct, unvarnished communication between MOA's management and target communities, including principally farmers	15 May 2010	Weekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COS • All Deputy Ministers • Director of Extension • Public Affairs and Information Services • IT Specialist

No	Activity	Description	Target Audience	Medium of Communication	Expected Outcome(s)	Timeline	Frequency	Accountability
6	Revamp and improve current e-communication services (MOA's website)	MOA already has a website managed by an external firm. It is infrequently updated because information is rarely forthcoming from county offices and the Information Section of the Ministry lacks the capacity to regularly update the website. The employment of a Webmaster and reorganization of the Information Section will change this. The website is an instant and effective medium of information dissemination, education, and promotion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public • Potential and current investors in agriculture sector • Liberians in the Diaspora • Academic institutions at home and abroad • Students and researchers or research institutions 	MOA Website Other websites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instant and sustained availability of information on MOA and its activities and success stories • Education 	15 May 2010	Weekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Webmaster • IT Specialist • Public Affairs and Information Services

MATRIX IV: COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY–INFORMING AND EDUCATING FARMERS AND AGRICULTURE WORKERS

D. Core objectives and activities:

- (1) Educate the farmer and make her able to understand and apply modern and productive farming techniques.
- (2) Equip the farmer with the enlightenment skills she needs to be an MOA partner and a farmer leader in her community.

No	Activity	Description	Target Audience	Medium of Communication	Expected Outcome(s)	Timeline	Frequency	Accountability
1	Inform and educate farmers, Extension Agents, MOA's field staff, community leaders, partners, and county authorities	Launch "Agriculture Doctor", A Public Affairs Radio Program of the Ministry of Agriculture. Program will be a teacher-radio type program; guests will be requested to speak in everyday Liberian English. It will be broadcast weekly by simulcast on national radio stations in all counties. It will also be recorded and broadcast on CBRs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers • CACs • DAOs • MOA Clan Agents • County Authorities • Collaborating national and international partners • Public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National radio stations • National TV stations • CBRs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informs and educates farmers • Creates understanding of MOA's reform agenda • Creates support and acceptance of MOA's new approaches to agriculture development (i.e., programs such as FFS and Urban Farming, etc.) 	15 July 2010–31 December 2010; impact assessment to be carried out	Weekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Affairs and Information Services Bureau • Director of Extension • IT Specialist

No	Activity	Description	Target Audience	Medium of Communication	Expected Outcome(s)	Timeline	Frequency	Accountability
2	Inform and educate farmers, Extension Agents, MOA's field staff, community leaders, partners, and county authorities	Launch "Farmer Voice", A Public Affairs Newsletter of the Ministry specifically designed and devoted to promote agriculture. It will be published weekly and devote its coverage to agricultural efforts at the local level with the farmer as the target audience. The newsletter should also be published at MOA's central office with a different focus: to build staff moral and cohesion, motivate staff by giving them a medium of expression.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local farmer • Agriculture workers (Extension Agents and partners) • Local authorities • Public • MOA staff 	Newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a sense of recognition and importance among ordinary Liberian farmers • Motivates and inspires • Creates a competitive spirit • Provides information • Serves as a medium of feedback (i.e., farmer's view and understanding of programs) 			

No	Activity	Description	Target Audience	Medium of Communication	Expected Outcome(s)	Timeline	Frequency	Accountability
3	Inform and educate the public nationally and internationally (<i>Farmer</i> magazine)	MOA has a magazine which is called <i>Farmer</i> , and is irregular and poorly managed. This is an important tool for public education and information dissemination. It is a tool by which MOA can tell its success stories and publicize the efforts it is making along with the support of partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GOL • International donor partners • International and national collaborating partners • Public (Liberians at home and in Diaspora) 	Magazine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educates public • Showcases success stories to donor partners and international and national collaborating partners • Demonstrates efficient utilization of funds and outcomes • Creates pride among technical and professional staff 	TBD		

APPENDIX III: MOA AGRO-COMMUNICATIONS ACTION PLAN

No	Strategic Activity	Description	Target Audience (s)	Medium/ Media	Goal(s)/ Objectives	Timeframe		Frequency	Accountability
						Start date	End date		
1	Construction of Bulletin Boards	Bulletin Boards will be built and erected at all MOA offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff • Public • Partners 	Bulletin Boards	Inform and educate staff about MOA's activities	06/25/2010 – 12/12-2010 (Permanent feature of MOA's public information service)	Updated daily	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration • Public Affairs and Information Services Bureau 	
2	Weekly Ministerial Meeting	Weekly meeting conducted by the Minister with Deputy and Assistant Ministers and Principal Directors	Deputy and Assistant Ministers	Ministerial Council Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build understanding • Create sense of participation • Build team spirit and shared responsibility, etc. 	06/30/2010 – 12/2010 (Institutionalized)	Weekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minister • Chief of Office • Staff • Deputy Minister for Administration • Principal Director of Administration 	
3	General Staff Meeting	Minister or her designee will conduct general staff	General staff	General Staff Meeting Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create understanding • Minimize rumors and gossip • Create a sense of recognition & participation 	06/20/2010 – 12/2010 (Institutionalized)	Monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minister • Chief of Staff • Deputy Minister for Administration • HR Director 	

No	Strategic Activity	Description	Target Audience (s)	Medium/ Media	Goal(s)/ Objectives	Timeframe		Frequency	Accountability
						Start date	End date		
4	Ministerial and Principal Director Retreat	A weekend retreat to discuss vision, mission, challenges facing MOA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minister Deputy Ministers Assistant Ministers Consultants Principal Directors 	Retreat forum (possibly in Cape Mount or LAC), but away from Monrovia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create sense of collegiality and team spirit Enhance social bond and cohesion Create shared vision & commitment to MOA 	07/02-04/2010 – (Retreat should form best managerial practice)		Quarterly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minister Deputy Ministers Assistant Ministers Consultants Principal Directors
5	Monthly budget and expenditure implementation review	This monthly budget and expenditure review is necessary for purposes of accountability and on-time project implementation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minister Deputy and Assistant Ministers Principal Directors Comptroller 	Budget review forum (MOA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance fiscal responsibility Promote judicious management of resources Minimize rumor mongering Enhance transparent and accountability 	06/30/2010 - (Review meeting should be permanent)		Monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minister Deputy Ministers Assistant Ministers Comptroller Principal Directors
6	Development of ICT System	Sustainability of change and reform efforts depends on efficient and effective internal information communication and technology system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minister Deputy Ministers ICT Specialist Public Affairs and Information Services 	Internal capacity building to enhance communication flow and information dissemination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to information Improved understanding Enhance two-way communication Expedite information flow 	Ongoing; completed by 06/30/2010 – (Regularly improved)		Regular maintenance and update (Weekly)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minister Deputy Minister for Administration ICT Specialist Public Affairs and Information Services

No	Strategic Activity	Description	Target Audience (s)	Medium/ Media	Goal(s)/ Objectives	Timeframe		Frequency	Accountability
						Start date	End date		
7	Build and display “suggestion boxes” at MOA’s central and county offices.	To provide opportunity for staff and public inputs into policymaking and program planning and implementation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff • Partners • Clients • Public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To enrich policy making and program planning • Make policies and programs relevant and more beneficial to end-users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the scope of policy and program inputs • Make policy and program planning more participatory 	07/15/2010 -		Weekly content delivery and analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deputy Minister for Administration • Principal Director for Administration • Public Affairs and Information Services Bureau
8	Prepare and prominently display MOA’s monthly or quarterly planner at central and county offices	To provide staff, partner, and public access to MOA’s monthly or quarterly programs and activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff • Partners • Public 	Planners displayed at MOA’s Head Office and CAC offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create structure and system of accountability • Monitor, evaluate, and adjust programs, activities, and outcomes 	07/30/2010 – (Planner should be a management tool and maintained)		Monthly or quarterly reviews and adjustments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minister • Chief of Staff to Minister • Deputy Minister for Planning • Assistant Minister for Planning • Public Affairs and Information Services Bureau
9	Quarterly interagency review meetings	Senior consultative meetings chaired by Minister or MOA’s Representative.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MOA • Sector GOL agencies • National and International Partners 	Consultative and Information sharing and review forums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harmonize, consolidate program planning and coordination • Resolve potential conflicting roles • Maximize comparative advantage • Enhance partnership, cooperation and collaboration 	09/30/2010 - (Consultative forum should be a permanent tool for MOA’s collaboration with partners and other GOL agencies.		Quarterly beginning 09/30-/2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief of Staff to Minister • Deputy Minister for Planning • Assistant Minister for Planning • Technical Consultant to MOA • Public Affairs and Information Services

No	Strategic Activity	Description	Target Audience (s)	Medium/ Media	Goal(s)/ Objectives	Timeframe		Frequency	Accountability
						Start date	End date		
10	Reorganize Press Office and hire more qualified and proactive personnel	Reorganization and restaffing critical to success of reform and change agenda of MOA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Communications Division” • Staff 	Administrative decision and action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a more professional and dynamic public information services unit within MOA • Hire trained and qualified personnel to market the reform and change initiatives of MOA 	07/01/2010 –	(Services provided by this section could be outsourced to a consulting firm while MOA identifies financial resources to hire more qualified personnel)	Quarterly performance review of personnel of new bureau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minister • Deputy and Assistant Ministers • Principal Director of Administration
11	Launch visibility and rebranding and marketing reform and change agenda of MOA	Aggressive multimedia campaign to create awareness, visibility, and new image of MOA – and traction for its reform and change agenda.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers • Public • National and International Partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Print and Visual media (new spa-per, posters, bumper stickers, T-shirts and caps, etc. • Electronic media (radio and TV, dramas and skits, discussion programs, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create awareness and knowledge of MOA’s activities • Market and win support for MOA’s reform agenda • Create an improved image • Educate, inform, and motivate farmers and all end-users of MOA’s services 	06/30/2010 –	(Visibility and rebranding programs should begin as early as possible – and should continue)	Bimonthly review of all programs to assess benefits and implementation procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Affairs and Information Services Bureau • (Interim phase, a consulting firm should assist the new bureau to guide implementation of activities outlined in strategic document under this domain)

No	Strategic Activity	Description	Target Audience (s)	Medium/ Media	Goal(s)/ Objectives	Timeframe		Frequency	Accountability
						Start date	End date		
12	Develop effective nationwide e-communication service (MOA website, MOA SMS messaging services to reach farmers in distant locations	Efficient, effective, and timely information dissemination is critical to successful management of any institution. It is also a useful tool for public education, awareness and mobilization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers • Potential and current investors in agro-sector • Liberians in Diaspora • Academic institutions • CSOs • Public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GSM service provides • MOA website • Executive Mansion website • Other website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a medium of direct, unvarnished two-way information flow between MOA and its core constituencies (farmers, partners, etc). • Instantly disseminate and celebrate success stories of MOA and local farmers 	07/15/2010 –	(MOA already has a website; ICT Specialist demonstrated ability to launch nation-wide text messaging program; initiatives should be intensified).	Monthly review and adjustment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICT Specialist • Public Affairs and Information Services • County Agriculture Coordinators

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