

The Comparative Research Programme on Poverty

COMMUNICATION

PLAN

2015-2020



CROP Communication Plan

1. Introduction

This document is an annex to the “Strategic Plan 2015-2020” for CROP (Comparative Research Programme on Poverty) and will serve as its communication plan for the same period.

1.1 The need for a communication plan

This communication plan is designed to support the strategic objectives of CROP and provide action items for the organisation’s communication for the next 6 years.

CROP was established to produce knowledge aimed at lifting people out of poverty. In order to increase its effectiveness, CROP needs to be equipped with a communication plan to serve as a guideline for approaching the different audiences and to describe tasks and responsibilities within CROP.

The CROP Secretariat focuses on the dissemination of research produced within its network. One of the goals of this plan is to improve the communication between researchers and research-based knowledge users, including organisations and decision makers – in other words; to increase the impact of the network’s activities.

2. Communication Plan Objectives

The overall objectives of the communication plan are as follows:

- To influence knowledge production on poverty (and poverty-related issues) and provide information that is relevant to national and international decision making processes.
- To provide a critical, scientific, and constructive approach to main international initiatives, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and their replacement.
- To improve CROP’s communication capabilities by increasing both the quality and efficiency of the communication channels.

The sustainability of the communication plan is crucial. Based on an estimate of existing and future resources, the objectives have been divided into the short, medium and long term in order to secure proper implementation. Objectives and means are adjusted to the existing resources, making it possible to launch the communication plan and operate for the first two years (short-term objectives).

2.1 Short-term objectives (by 2016)

The short-term objectives will focus on consolidating the network and contact with the academic environment and (to a certain extent) the media;

- To improve integration into ISSC and UiB (i.e., the sponsors) and facilitate co-operation with their units/ members/ research centres through the improvement of existing communication channels and the establishment of new ones.

- To consolidate CROP's global (academic) network and expand it by targeting communication to the areas (thematic and geographic) where our links are at their weakest.
- To increase the media's knowledge-based coverage of issues related to poverty, primarily in geographical areas of CROP activities.

By improving both internal and external relations, CROP seeks to increase the impact of critical inter-disciplinary and comparative research on poverty.

2.2 Medium-term objectives (by 2018)

The medium-term objectives will include a focus on contact with selected members of the development community both at the national and international level;

- Communication will target organisations working on global poverty eradication, particularly development agencies in donor countries and the Nordic countries, as well as UN regional economic organisations and UN research organisations.

2.3 Long-term objectives (by 2020)

The long-term objectives seek to consolidate and expand a network capable of influencing relevant global debates on poverty eradication and prevention. In addition, CROP will:

- Selectively target key decision makers at national and international level. For this purpose, CROP will co-ordinate a dissemination strategy with key scientific and policy-oriented research organisations which share the objective of preventing and eradicating on a global scale.

3. Audiences (Target Groups)

In this plan the target groups we wish to reach have been divided into internal and external groups according to their relationship with CROP.

3.1 Internal audiences

This group includes participants in CROP's core organs, programmes and projects, as well as units and programmes of CROP's sponsors. As the main reachable audience there should be special attention towards these organisations. Close communication and interaction between the two parties (ISSC / UiB) can result in a mutual development and new synergy effects.

CROP members

- ✓ Scientific Committee
- ✓ CROP Fellows
- ✓ Researchers and administrators of projects supported or initiated by CROP
- ✓ Researchers participating in thematic groups initiated by CROP
- ✓ CROPNet - individual members (poverty and development researchers registered as active members in CROP's database)

CROP members are key elements in the development and success of the communication plan as they are both sources and targets of CROP's messages.

Sponsors

- ✓ University of Bergen (UiB) – its leadership, academic departments and research programmes - as well as the students and researchers
- ✓ International Social Science Council (ISSC) – its organisation (Presidency, Secretariat, Executive Committee, General Assembly) and members
(see: www.worldsocialscience.org/our-members/)

According to the contract that regulates the relationship between UiB and the ISSC, CROP should integrate itself within the University of Bergen's academic programme.

3.2 External audiences

To avoid dispersion, the communication plan shall, in the case of all external audiences, concentrate on a reduced number of selected organisations. The selection criteria involve variables such as geographical representation, relevance, affinity etc.

CROP will maintain an overview of specific target audiences as part of its annual work plan. These audiences will typically represent one of the following categories:

Universities / Scientific institutions

Networking and collaboration with other scientific institutions are among the main objectives of this programme. Sharing the research results with other researchers and academic colleagues can increase the quality of poverty research. Such collaboration contributes not only to the production, but also to the dissemination of research results, thus increasing the impact.

Young poverty researchers

Graduate students and early career scholars in the area of poverty and development research are main targets of CROP's activities and they play an important role in workshops and publications. This plan seeks to increase their participation in the programme through the use of a plethora of channels in which we offer them the messages CROP produces and/or disseminates.

Decision makers

CROP believes that policy and action can be improved by using knowledge-based research. Targets in this group are elected representatives at the local/regional/national level, as well as in key international institutions.

Non-governmental actors and organisations

Non-governmental organisations find themselves in the crossroads between practitioners, fact finders/researchers and agents of change and are as such important partners for CROP - as providers of information, project partners and receivers of research results.

Donors and co-operation agencies

National development agencies, whether they are focused on research projects or field work, have many of the same goals as CROP; eradication of poverty, human rights, sustainable development etc. As important funders, it is vital to get them involved in projects, keep them informed about CROP activities and perspectives, CROP-sponsored research, as well as other related approaches to the question of global poverty.

International organisations & UN offices

CROP sees UN offices as key international players, working towards a common goal. A close relationship with UN organisations such as UNICEF, UNDP and UNESCO, in particular their national offices, is therefore of significant importance.

Media

The media is an important player in shaping public opinion – and that of policy makers. It provides an important audience for CROP both in terms of communicating research-based knowledge and putting development issues on the agenda. CROP shall use UiB channels and capabilities to reach media agents more effectively.

3.3 Communication officers

The communication officers of our partner institutions do not represent a distinct group in real terms, as they are only representing the institutions, organisations or agencies for which they work. At the same time they deserve to be treated as a separate audience, as this is a group of people that are the key to distributing our information *out* to the groups mentioned above, as well as feeding information (on events, calls, new research etc) *in* from our partners.

4. Key Messages

Poverty is a violation of human rights and could be eradicated with existing resources in the world. However, as this is rarely the picture presented in the media, CROP will work to put this issue on the public agenda and contribute to increased knowledge. CROP's aim is to disseminate an alternative and critical message in order to influence decisions towards poverty reduction, eradication and prevention.

Despite the historical consensus reached at the international level (Millennium Declaration), poverty levels, in absolute terms, have only changed minimally over the past decades. CROP's intellectual production and messages will aim to identify the shortcomings of current strategies, tactics and policies to eradicate poverty and will provide the community with updated knowledge to overcome them.

The CROP Secretariat needs to have access to communications professionals, either as part of its own staff or within the host organisation, in order to build clear and straightforward messages from the knowledge production of CROP or partners.

5. Sources

The main sources of knowledge are:

- a) CROP's core activities (seminars, workshops, round tables etc.) and products (books, briefs, articles, videos etc.)
- b) Member activities and products. These can be products (books, articles, videos etc.) from researchers associated with CROP, or activities at partner institutions or within projects or thematic groups. In particular, CROP would like to encourage the elaboration of more messages based on partners or perspectives from the South.

- c) Other relevant messages related to critical contributions to poverty research in general, and to CROP’s niches (as specified in the strategic plan) in particular.

6. Communication Channels

CROP has the following communication channels at hand:

Books	In co-operation with Zed books in London, CROP publishes a series of books (mainly essay collections) on different poverty-related topics.
Briefs	A series of shorter “Poverty Briefs” (around 1000 words) written by academics and other specialists within the field.
Scientific journals	Special editions or single articles in recognised scientific journals.
Conferences	CROP members contribute at conferences organised by others as well as our own conferences.
Seminars / Workshops	Together with local partner institutions, CROP organises workshops where academics from different countries present their papers, usually following an open call for papers.
Public events (round table)	In conjunction with smaller events (e.g. a workshop), there is often a public event in the form of a round table where the topics of the workshop are presented and discussed with academics, students and other interested parties.
Projects	Participation in concrete projects gives opportunities for the production and dissemination of knowledge.
Newsletter	CROP publishes a bi-annual newsletter, summing up the previous semester’s events and publications as well as providing a calendar for the subsequent semester.
CROP Website	The website www.crop.org provides information about the CROP network, publications, research resources and upcoming (past) events.
Blog	A CROP blog, as a supplement to the website, could be a means to publish shorter articles and notices, while stimulating interaction and debate.
E-mail	E-mail is a channel for bilateral dialogue and a way of distributing the newsletter, calls etc. As the newsletter is produced only twice a year, more frequent e-mail distributions of news, events and publications are even more important.
Social Networks	Social networks, in particular Twitter (but also Facebook, or even YouTube/Vimeo for video broadcasting), can be effective tools to reach out to a wider audience with our productions – provided we have the capacity to maintain them.
Meetings	Smaller and more informal meetings than the organised workshops.
Posters and Brochures	Mainly a channel for CROP to advertise its events, but printed materials can also be used to provide thematic information <i>during</i> events.

Please note that the first seven of these channels (books, briefs, articles, conferences, seminars/workshops, public events and projects) are simultaneously defined as sources of information. While these formats help distribute the messages from CROP scholars, they are also products that we want to communicate to a wider audience.

7. The Creation of Output

When CROP communicates with the specified target groups, the central message is extracted from the information source (whether a book, conference or other source) and “packaged” in a form appropriate for the selected information channel. The information channel at hand for the different sources can be listed as follows:

Source	Output	Channels	Responsible
Books - CROP-Zed book series - Other books by CROP	Summary of findings/arguments	- Brief - Website - Newsletter - Mailing list - Social media - Blog	Communication Officer
Briefs - Poverty briefs	Main arguments summarised	- Website - Newsletter - Mailing list - Social media - Blog	Communication Officer
Publications in recognised scientific journals - Single articles - Special editions	Main arguments summarised	- Brief - Website - Newsletter - Mailing list - Social media - Blog	Communication Officer
Conferences - With CROP as co-organiser - With CROP as contributor	Summaries of papers	- Website - Newsletter - Social media - Blog	Executive Officers
Seminars/ Workshops - Organised by CROP and local organisations	First the call for papers, later the outcome (book, papers or briefs)	- Posters (call only) - Brief (outcome only) - Books (outcome only) - Newsletter (outcome only) - Website - Mailing list - Social media - Blog	Communication Officer
Public events - Round table - After an event such as a workshop	10-line summary of ideas + panellists’ short bios	- Posters (pre-event only) - Website - Newsletter - Social media - Blog	Communication Officer
Projects - Projects initiated by CROP - Projects where CROP is a participant	News ad project reports	- Books - Articles - Website - Newsletter - Social media - Blog - Printed brochures	Communication Officer
Newsletter - Bi-annual newsletter	Main ideas in the foreword	- Website - Mailing list - Social media - Blog	Communication Officer
External production - Academic output by	Reference or link to the book or article	- Website - Social media - Blog	Communication Officer

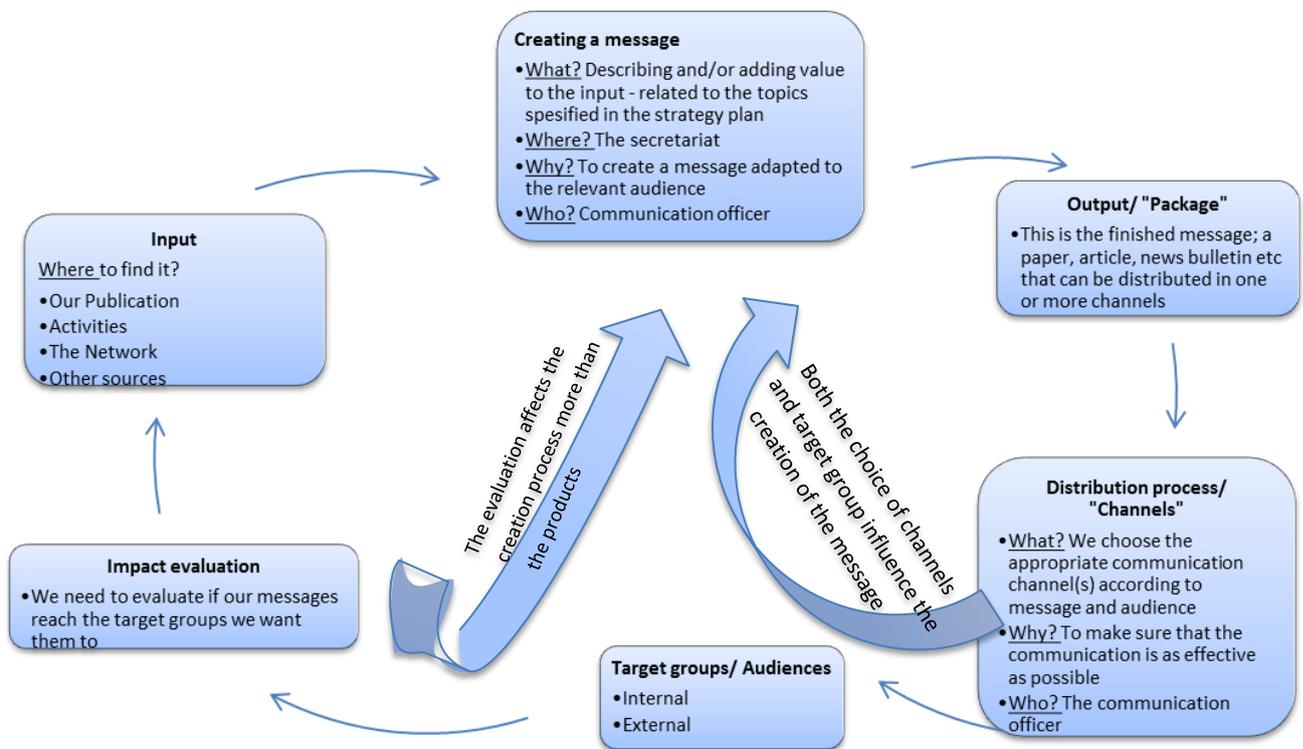
members			
- Academic output by partner institutions			

CROP Communication officer

In order to maintain a continuous dissemination “push” on the part of CROP, there is a need for a dedicated communication officer. This person’s responsibility will be to secure the media presence of our messages, to make sure that the content is “packaged” correctly with respect to the target audience (and the selected communication channel) and to maintain our presence in the social media – if and when we should choose to take that direction.

8. The Communication Cycle

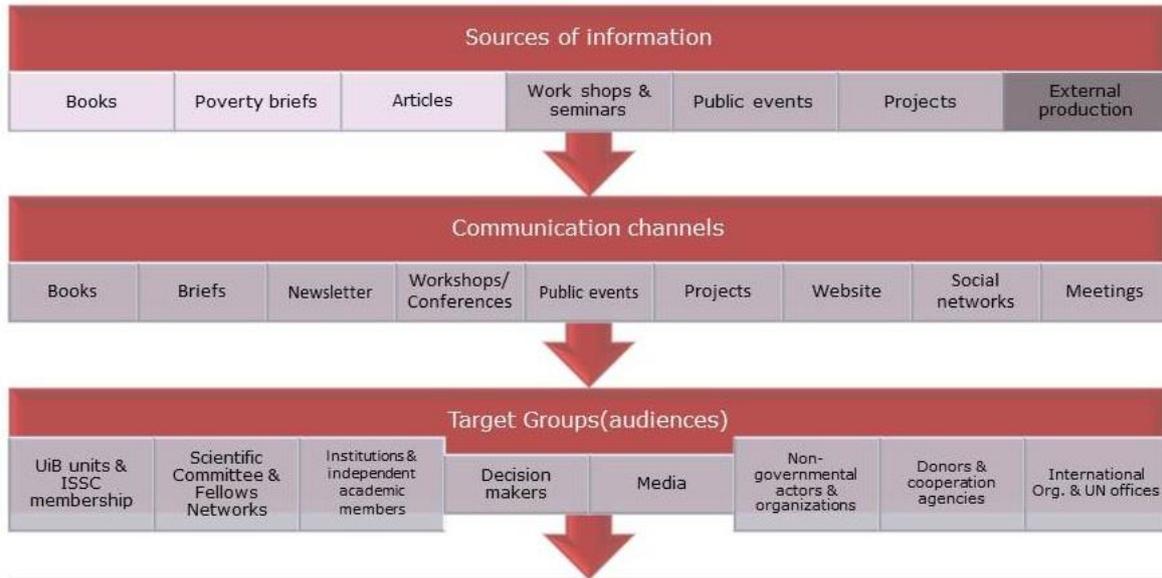
The key messages, communication channels and target groups relate to each other as exemplified in the figure below.



In practice there is not one source of information being shaped into one message being disseminated via one channel to a homogeneous target group. Therefore, a realistic figure would have many arrows going between different target groups and channels of communication.

CROP will create communication “packages” in order to convey its message to specific target groups.

The creation of communication “packages”



By using these dissemination tools, CROP will communicate its messages to the target groups and increase the impact of its scientific production.

Feasibility in the short term, in conjunction with gradual expansion and sustainability in the long term are the three main pillars of the plan. The first pillar refers to the opportunity to manage the communication targets we have set with only the existing resources at the secretariat; the second refers to the gradual incorporation of communication professionals into the staff (or closer co-operation with UiB specialists/Communications Department) enabling us to expand our scope. The third pillar refers to the idea of a learning process through impact evaluation making our communication strategy robust in the long term.

A crucial aim is to make sure that information from CROP is associated with a high level of reliability and predictability.

9. Operationalising our short-term goals

In order to be more specific we will operationalise our goals and objectives by selecting the relevant audiences and channels of communication. We also need to operationalise the objectives into short-term targets by which we can measure the impact.

➤ **Objective 1: Improve the integration into ISSC and UiB (i.e. the sponsors) and facilitate co-operation with their units/ members/ research centres through the improvement of existing communication channels and the establishment of new ones.**

Target groups:

Within both the ISSC and the University of Bergen there are three different target groups, needing three different types of communication:

- The leadership of the two organisations - acting as the programme's sponsors
- Units/departments/centres with which we share an academic interest
- Other units/members/staff in the two organisations
- The communication officers/departments

Messages:

What do we need to communicate with each of these groups – and why?

- **The leadership of UiB and ISSC** needs to know that CROP is fulfilling the mandate that we have been given and that we are spending the allocated resources wisely. This means that this group will need information on past and future activities and productions, as well as financial reports.
- **The units that share an academic interest** represent a major target group for scientific production. However, as we are not only interested in reaching out to these units, but also want to ensure real co-operation, we need to distribute additional information about upcoming events and calls (in order to enable contributions/participation). Furthermore, direct communication and two-way dialogue are also necessary in order to foster new projects.
- **The rest of the institutions** are groups that may be interested in CROP's activities and productions – depending on the concrete topic. There may also be projects where an “untraditional” partner, for example within the natural sciences, is sought.
- **The communication officers/departments** are our closest allies in distributing our messages to a wider audience. They will therefore need the information (including calls and invitations) that we want to see spread widely, both inside and outside the institutions.

Communication channels

- **The leadership of UiB and ISSC** can be reached with the bi-annual newsletters that we are currently distributing electronically and which focus on activities and publications that have been produced. This can be supplemented with annual activity and financial reports.
- **The units that share an academic interest** need access to our academic productions, mostly available on our website. This information should, however, be supplemented by a mailing list and possibly a twitter feed in order to lead possible stakeholders into our website. The fact that the audience can be found within a rather compact geographical outstretch provides the benefit that they can also receive academic input via events, seminars and meetings and that in marketing these, digital information can be supplemented by printed materials such as posters and brochures. This is also true for calls for papers. Meetings on possible projects can also easily be held on site, as a supplement to emails and video conferences.
- **The rest of the institutions** will benefit from a “spillover effect” from the information targeted at the selected units (posters, brochures, events, website etc.), but the direct communication (e-mails, newsletter etc.) will need to be less frequent yet just as targeted.
- **The communication officers/departments** can perhaps be most easily reached by twitter, which makes it easy for them to help give the message a wider reach. For some messages, however, a press release or a web link might still be the most suitable option.

Measurement of targets

We will use the following measurements to assess our success in achieving the target of improving communication with the members of our two sponsoring institutions:

- **The number of communication channels** in place between CROP and its sponsors, the ISSC and UiB, and the extent to which they are **actively used**.

- **Recipients** of CROP information within the two institutions, measured by the number of people on our mailing list (the only communication channel where we have the home institution of the recipients).
- **The actual participation in CROP events** (calls for papers, workshops/seminars and public events) of persons within UIB or ISSC. This will give us an indication of both the level at which they have received our “advertising” and the number of people receiving our messages “on site”.

Objective 2: Expand and consolidate CROP’s global (academic) network

Target groups

- Our “inner circle” consists of the Scientific Committee, CROP fellows and the projects and thematic groups supported or initiated by CROP.
- Second, we have a large academic network of scholars who have either participated in our events or signed up to our mailing list, meaning that they want to receive more information.
- It is important to reach young poverty and development researchers and graduate students either within or outside our established network.
- We also have a network of institutions with which we either have formalised agreements or with which we co-operate on a regular basis.
- Finally, there is the potential network; the institutions and scholars that *should* work with us but do not yet do so.

Messages

The message that we want to send out to these groups is two-fold (or possibly three-fold):

- We want to provide them with high quality academic knowledge, either directly in the form of articles or as reference to longer publications produced by CROP or by researchers in our network.
- We want to invite them to contribute to calls, workshops, projects etc.
- To a certain extent, we also want to provide information about past events, first and foremost as a way of giving credit to the people who have contributed.

Communication channels

The main product for this group is publications; books, poverty briefs, articles and perhaps also lectures, which we need to bring to people’s attention. Our website is our main platform, but we will also use other electronic channels of communication such as mailing lists and possibly also social media/twitter/blog in order to lead people to our website(s).

Measurement of targets

When assessing to what extent we have achieved the objective of consolidating and expanding our academic network we need to look at what we do to provide our network with added value (the frequency, level and quality of the messages we send out), the size of our network (as measured by the number of members) and its quality (as measured by the level of interaction). Our network, however, has several levels of commitment:

- The part of our network merely **interested in receiving information** from CROP can be measured by monitoring the number signed on to our mailing list or visiting our website.
- The **active membership base** (the people who are more committed to CROP activities) is reflected in our membership database, where we would also like to see an increase.

- Mid-way between these two groups is the part of our network that would like to **receive (and share) information and engage in discussions**, but without full participation in our activities. For this group, social media (such as blogs or twitter) would serve the objective. Social media applications make it very easy to track both output (the number and frequency of messages published) and impact (the number of followers, distribution, feedback etc.)

Objective 3: Increase the media’s knowledge-based coverage of issues related to poverty

Getting the media to write about *any* topic is not easy; increasing the knowledge-based coverage of a topic such as poverty is possibly even more challenging. It is therefore important that we start with a limited number of publications/companies and then revise or expand the list annually.

Communication channels

There are two, or possibly three, principal communication channels for this group:

- **Press releases** to select media concerning either events or new publications
- **Chronicles or articles** written by CROP scholars or about CROP’s activities and products, not only for academic publications, but also for newspapers and other *popular* media
- **Twitter messages** can be re-tweeted by media companies. In this way, the messages stay within the twitter-sphere and do not necessarily reach the “real media”, but they nevertheless attract a wide audience.

Measurement of targets

The following measurements will be used to assess our success in achieving increased media coverage:

- Number of press releases by CROP
- Number of published articles by CROP members/fellows
- Number of articles citing CROP members/fellows
- Number of articles covering CROP sponsored events
- Number of “re-tweets” by media channels.

All the short-term objectives will be further operationalised (with more concrete targets) in the annual work plans for 2015 and 2016 (and beyond).