Dissemination Planning Guide for product launch
Background

The Digital Advisory Support Services for Accelerated Rural Transformation (DAS) Program is a facility funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD.) Development Gateway: an IREX Venture, Tech Change, and JengaLab comprise the IFAD-DAS consortium of partners. The goal of the program is to address the gap in digital tools and information access for smallholder farmers through rapid advisory deployments to countries across Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia.

This guide was developed in late 2022 to support the IFAD-funded Program for Rural Irrigation Development (PRIDE) in Malawi. PRIDE developed a digital platform to connect farmers and private sector partners in a digital marketplace; and this guide was intended to support the platform launch. In developing this guide, the IFAD-DAS team conducted an assessment of 240 private and public sector stakeholders, which included focus groups with 113 farmers.

This dissemination planning guide focuses on key messaging for all stakeholders and ways to inform potential users about the product and its benefits. While this guide is specific to the Malawi context, it can be adapted and scaled for use in other contexts.
Main Messaging
From interviews and focus groups, several key themes/concepts emerged that are crucial to messaging for all user groups:

- Trust/Trustworthiness
- Timeliness
- Usefulness
- Simplicity of messaging
Usefulness

If stakeholders don’t see the relevance to their lives from the start, they will not use it.

- Should be the primary dissemination messaging
- Build case studies, testimonials, word of mouth referrals
- Consider ways to ensure an even distribution of user types from the beginning
- Messaging should always include information on how to download/interact with the platform
Trust/Trustworthiness

Across all levels and types of stakeholders, trust was one of the most common themes in terms of challenges and opportunities.

- Messaging needs to reflect the ways that the platform is equally or more trustworthy than the in person market
- Highlighting features that build trust
- Encouraging feedback and questions
**Timeliness**

A major benefit of the platform is the real time exchange of information currently available in the marketplace.

- Highlight ways that the app can be more timely and relevant than the current face-to-face market
- Highlight the features that keep the app/information up to date
- Highlight opportunities for businesses to add to the timeliness (warehouse services, etc.)
Simplicity

The platform will be complex, but useful. It will be crucial to find ways to explain the app in a simple and straightforward language that is easy to understand.

- Specifically for farmers who will not be interacting with the app itself
- Potentially user test messaging and concepts before dissemination starts
Methods and Examples
Traditional Media

- While television was mentioned by stakeholders, radio and newspaper were more prevalent.
- Consider ways to get messaging replayed on the radio – many farmers mentioned that programs were often played while they were in the fields and not repeated.
  - Consider partnerships that could get interviews or interview clips distributed more broadly (Viamo, interactive voice response, etc.)
- YouTube, while not a traditional media is a way to grow the apps social media footprint, while also providing a way for messaging to be replayed.
- Consider who from PRIDE (or partners) will speak for the app: someone who knows the app well, can explain it simply, and does not get flustered under pressure.
  - Practice interviews beforehand when possible.
Traditional Media: Examples

- **Newspaper (pictured)**
  - Print media is more likely for reaching private sector and partner organizations
  - PRIDE could extend the reach by reposting print media on social media platforms

- **Radio programs/interviews**
  - Radio is a more likely way to reach farmers, but others as well

- **Presented on Television**
  - Examples from The Times YouTube Channel
  - TV was the lowest priority among stakeholders
Social Media

Social Media is an obvious way to reach potential users. Consider the current user base as a way to prioritize PRIDE team social media efforts.

---

2022 Social Media Users in Malawi

There were 820.4 thousand social media users in Malawi in January 2022, which is approximately 4.1% of the total population. It also represents an increase of 22.4% from 2021.

- Facebook – 752,000 or 3.8% of the total population
- Linkedin – 190,000 or 1.9% of the total population
- Twitter – 43,000 or .02% of the total population
- Instagram – 78,600 or .4% of the total population
- TikTok – Unknown
Social Media

• While each social media platform has its own quirks and specifications, many campaigns will be useful across multiple platforms
  ○ Similar graphics and campaigns can also be used in Whatsapp groups
• Remember the goal is not engagement (although it might provide useful feedback.) The goal is new platform users
• Graphics are a crucial component of social media
  ○ Specifically for lower-literacy audiences
  ○ Use alt-text to make it accessible for people with visual disabilities
• Not all content has to be original, reposting others’ content (with attribution) while linking to the platform can be just as useful
Infographics (pictured)
- Infographics provide information in a more visual format
- Could be particularly useful for lower literacy audiences
- Think

User Videos/Testimonials
- For PRIDE, this method of gathering user stories could help potential users understand why the platform would be useful to them
- Videos can be made easily with a smartphone
Social Media: Examples (continued)

- **Quotes with images**
  - One way to share user testimonials about the app

- **Using graphics for detailed information** (pictured)
  - Different than an infographic, this type of image draws the eye and can result in higher engagement rates
  - Use the “alt text” to make the image accessible to readers with visual impairments

- **Resharing related media with a link to the app**
  - Uses existing engagement to draw attention to the PRIDE message
YouTube

You Tube is not always considered part of the social media landscape, but was mentioned by multiple stakeholders during key informant interviews.

- Several stakeholders describe using YouTube to learn about agricultural practices specifically
- Others described YouTube as a way to learn about new products and apps
- YouTube was also noted as a pastime for those with access
  - YouTube might be a more effective way of reaching some audiences than traditional television
- The National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi (NASFAM) expressed interest in providing information in a more engaging way and noted YouTube specifically as one potential outlet
● Videos using cartoons and graphics (pictured)
  ○ This types of videos can be more engaging and can feel more professional without paid performers
  ○ Graphics can be reused across social media

● Promotion through traditional media → Re-posted to YouTube
  ○ Can further engagement and reach of the platform messaging with very little associated cost
YouTube: Examples (continued)

- **Information directly to camera** (pictured)
  - Can feel more authentic
  - One method for showing user stories
  - Take less production time and resources

- **Product Demo**
  - A demo of the platform can be used/reused, and is an important part of helping potential users picture the platform
  - Gives time to refine script and get user feedback on messaging
  - Can use the same visuals with different languages
Posters, Flyers, and Billboards

Posters, flyers, billboards, and other printed materials were mentioned by stakeholders as a common way they receive and distribute information.

- Posters/flyers were mentioned universally as a way of receiving information
- Several locations were identified as ideal locations for placing flyers
  - Community resource centers
  - Market areas
  - Transit hubs
- Printed materials should target farmers, but include information for private sector as well
Posters, Flyers, and Billboards (continued)

- This type of printed material could be particularly useful as more information can be included (along with graphics) than can be included than in other dissemination methods.
- Considerations:
  - Colorful printed materials will be more engaging than the typical black/white.
  - Ways to provide information for lower-literacy audiences.
  - Include messaging on how the reader can become involved/sign up for the SMS list.
Print: Examples

- **Poster about new product**
  - This example doubles as social media and can be printed

- **Billboard countdown to launch** (pictured)
  - These billboards posted throughout Nairobi started a lot of conversations
  - The downside of this type of mystery is the lack of information about the product

- **Flyer with informational tabs**
  - Tabs could include a link to the app or Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD) code for learning more
Face-to-Face Outreach

Face-to-face outreach will be key, specifically with farmers as the PRIDE team is building trust. Face-to-face outreach can take almost any form.

- Utilize the lead farmer approach, provide sensitization and training for extension workers and lead farmers
- Host booth or table at agricultural and community fairs
- Targeted outreach to community level stakeholders
  - Community level VIPs
  - Specific private sector partners
  - Trusted community members
- Outreach through existing partnerships
- Meeting with or guest lecture for students and professors in agriculture programs
Booth at a community event

- This could be a particularly useful way to ensure community members see the USSD and the platform functionality
- Also for getting user feedback
- Having a wi-fi enabled booth could ensure user downloads in the moment
Creating or identifying a person or mascot to represent the platform is one way to build product recognition and trust with potential users.

- A mascot can be developed into whatever type of “personality” will best drive users to the platform, which is not the case for a human spokesperson.
- If the mascot is well received, it can be built into the app and used to “gamify” various app components, which can drive further user engagement and adoption.
- If a spokesperson is selected, consider the following questions:
  - Who would be universally trusted?
  - Who would drive engagement?
  - Who could be reliable in the long term?
Mascot/Spokesperson: Examples

- **World Cup Mascot** (pictured)
  - A fun personified cartoon that is more engaging than a message alone
  - Becomes recognizable with the product
  - Potentially less costly than a human spokesperson

- **Human spokesperson**
  - NASFAM uses their CEO (see example link), but PRIDE could use anyone as long as they are trustworthy
  - Having a “young farmer” competition to find the spokesperson could be an engaging way to grow the audience
Dramatized Content

Sponsoring storylines in new or existing media that highlight the platform and demonstrate how/why to use it is a subtle way to drive new users to the app.

- Partner with organizations already engaged in dramatized content. PRIDE can expand the reach of messaging through:
  - Listening clubs
  - Video watch parties
- Partner with youth-led programs to create new dramatized content
Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC)’s Development Broadcasting Unit

- This unit is dedicated to development-related issues and has worked with various partners to include educational information in MBC content

Soul City – South Africa (pictured)

- Television series that takes place in a fictionalized town in South Africa, which focuses on issues facing communities everywhere
- Soul City created a resource guide
Other Methods

Additional methods could be used to demonstrate the platform’s usefulness, drive new users, and collect user feedback

- Whatsapp – stakeholders, even those without smartphones, mentioned the centrality of Whatsapp for receiving information
  - Reusing graphics from social media could be a way to boost messaging
  - Whatsapp would also be useful for voice messaging or other audio content
- User incentives: prizes, rewards, or other methods of encouragement for users to join and use the platform
  - Creating a system of incentives for signing up, referrals, or for ongoing engagement with the app could more rapidly grow a user base
Other Methods (continued)

- Creating an official launch event for the new platform
  - Using the launch as an inflection point for media engagement
  - Invite VIPs, partners, community members, and media to an event to provide a demo, answer questions, and celebrate the launch of the platform
- Host or participate in panel events to show how the PRIDE app fits into the larger agtech ecosystem
- Use networking events as a way to share news of the PRIDE app
Final Thoughts

• Working with a media agency could be particularly helpful, specifically when it comes to traditional media and dramatized content
• Consider user feedback and testing of key messaging to ensure that it is easy to understand
• Be inventive, there is no wrong way to tell people about the PRIDE platform
Citations


Background Photo of Malawi by Craig Manners on Unsplash. For other sources see in-text citation links.