REGIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION INITIATIVE

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

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1. INTRODUCTION

RAI (Regional Anti-corruption Initiative) is a regional organisation acting as a focal point and a leader for anti-corruption efforts. This role entails regular communication and coordination effort by the Secretariat towards RAI's members, partners and numerous stakeholders. In order to capitalize more on its communication efforts and to ensure that the messages are received, RAI decided to develop the Communication Strategy. The need was first identified in the Evaluation Report on Implementation of the Work Plan for 2014-2015, and the commitment to develop a Communication Strategy and put it in practice was set in the Work Plan for 2016-2017.

2. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Communicating strategically about the work of RAI to its many stakeholders – partners, beneficiaries, donors, professional community and others – is often not considered in the day-to-day activities of doing the work itself. Yet, how RAI bodies communicate is critical to achieving RAI's objectives.

RAI set out to change the way it communicates as an Organisation, and the Communication Strategy will inform as to how it plans to do that. RAI's Communication Strategy will consider external communications towards targeted national authorities, partners, donors, media and other relevant stakeholders in its environment.

Questions such as why RAI wants to communicate and to what purpose are essential, and that have been answered during the development process. The focal answer to all of the above is that RAI communicates in order to fulfil its Mission and to meet its Strategic Objectives. Although the Mission of the Organisation as well as strategic objectives are well described in the Strategic Document, it was essential to define a more focused and clear definition of who is RAI and what is its purpose.

RAI's mission is to lead regional cooperation to support anti-corruption efforts by providing a common platform for discussions through sharing knowledge and best practices. RAI's motto is: *"We look for better solutions together".*

Further on, to best inform the strategy development process, RAI Secretariat conducted two exercises to evaluate the current state of affairs. First exercise was a situation analysis that is presented bellow and the second exercise was a stakeholder's analysis elaborated in the section RAI Environment.

The Strategy lays the pillars and the direction RAI wishes to take. When distributed to other parties, it will serve as a tool for improved understanding of motives and objectives behind RAI communication efforts.

With this in mind, RAI developed a number of objectives to be achieved through strengthening organisational communications:

- ✓ To promote the results of RAI,
- ✓ To increase efficiency of RAI,
- ✓ To build new partnerships and strengthen those already existing,
- ✓ To build transparency.

Establishing target audience is also an important element of any communication strategy development. This aspect is further elaborated in the RAI Environment chapter, but it is important to state at the outset that RAI Secretariat is aware of its environment. The purpose of the Strategy is to widen its space and diversify the audience to include more relevant stakeholder and potential partners. There is a growing need to reach out to other professional organisations at regional and international level. There is also an impetus to deepen and strengthen our communication with national authorities. It is also essential that the communication is diversified to donor community.

Being aware of the limited resources, the Strategy will consider practical steps and actions that can be implemented with affordable investments. The Secretariat will also seek ways to utilize partner organisations' resources as vehicles in delivering its messages to the wider audience.

Internal consultations and situation analysis resulted with a number of priority issues in the communication and adjoining elements of RAI that need to be addressed in the Communications Strategy:

Issue	Current Perception	Desired Results/Position	Proposed actions
Positioning & branding	Stakeholders and potential partners do not have a clear idea of what RAI is and what is its Mission	Boosted recognition and credibility of RAI as a regional leader in the field of anti-corruption; Enhanced coherence with other stakeholders.	Promote RAI Mission Statement on every occasion; Develop and implement an image-building process to promote RAI achievements and impact.
Targeting audience	RAI's outreach is not targeted and messages are not reaching stakeholders as effectively as they should	Developed communication with key audience groups; increased recognition and impact of RAI. Different stakeholders perceive RAI as a partner and leader in the field.	Conduct target audience analysis; Design specific communication strategy for each key audience group; Consider target audience(s) in early stage of planning different activities (events in particular); Periodically revisit strategies for different stakeholders, update and adapt as needed.
Delivering and dissemination of information	RAI needs to enable flow of information about its actions, services and undertake more proactive dissemination.	RAI messages timely spread to targeted audience(s) and shape their opinion, work, decision and policy making.	Consider each target group's information and language needs and its desired way of accessing information; Enhance the function of public relations/outreach Ensure interpretation at important events. Offer timely and multilingual media content, with help of national partners.
Relevance and newsworthiness	Messages and news shared with wider audience not shaped to meet audience. Criteria for news and messages shared not clearly stated.	RAI serves as the main focal point for regional anti-corruption cooperation in SEE through the coordination, facilitation and dissemination of best practices and lessons learned. Its website recognized as the leader in providing relevant and timely information/news about state of AC affairs in the region, and serves as regional knowledge base.	Establish clear criteria for publishing news on RAI website; Focus attention on affairs of audience groups and the geographical RAI region; Continuously update RAI knowledge base with relevant and up-to-date publications and documents; Promote RAI mapping project among wider audience; Engage RAI interns to continuously work on population of knowledge base and mapping section.
Engaging	Recognized need for stakeholders'	RAI work is more relevant and better	Use partnerships for outreach and dissemination

stakeholders	participation, views and input, and partnering and collaboration for outreach and dissemination.	recognized among wide range of stakeholders. Different target groups are interested in work and participation/collaboration with RAI.	Facilitate targeted engagement of stakeholders Strengthen partnership and engagement of civil society Facilitate engagement of national stakeholders
RAI's communication culture	RAI's internal communication flows and communication culture among and across different organizational levels is not strategic and coordinated.	Effective strategic communication practices are successfully implemented throughout the organization.	Adopt internal communication mechanisms in order to ensure timely, effective and smooth communication in-between organizational levels Have a specific person lead implementation of the communication strategy Adopt and structure all communication contents towards outside stakeholders in order to ensure organizational communication consistency.
Gender perspective and social impact	Gender and social perspective not taken into consideration when communicating with wider audience.	RAI recognized among wider audience as an organization that mainstreams gender and considers social impact into its work and messages.	Make sure that any message, information, or material is engendered Consider how information is/will be communicated to different social groups Ensure that all examples, language, symbols and tools used in the communication are gender mainstreamed Organize gender mainstreaming training for RAI staff and continuously seek to increase knowledge and awareness in the area of gender responsive practices.

3. RAI ENVIROMENT AND STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

National governments as well as the civil sector mostly operate and communicate within the boundaries of respective states. The environment in this case tends to be relatively stable in terms of determining the communication channels, partners and other stakeholders.

For regional organisations such as RAI, the environment is more complex and it is much larger not only horizontally, but also vertically. Thus, RAI operates at the regional level with other regional organisations and entities, but also with national and international counterparts and stakeholders. In order to effectively communicate at such scale RAI must devote attention and resources to this purpose.

It is also important to emphasize one additional characteristic of communicating regionally: the variety of different languages and potential of cultural and language barriers. The language factor is often recognized as a tangible risk that can potentially be very harmful. Although the risk is mitigated by introducing the policy of English as the working language, this does not address the issue completely and, in fact, can create more barriers. However, due to the lack of a better solution that would be affordable, this policy remains the only one.

In order to make the best use of available resources, RAI Secretariat conducted analysis to identify all relevant entities that comprise RAI's environment. The team categorized them in succeeding target groups with general attributes and approach.

3.1 National Government Institutions

National institutions represent RAI's key beneficiaries as well as key stakeholders. RAI works closely and cooperates with national institutions that hold the anti-corruption competencies. These are typically ministries of justice, anti-corruption agencies and commissions, ministries of interior and prosecutors' offices. Such national institutions represent the most important audience and must be given a priority in maintaining communication and constructive dialogue.

In order to strengthen the communication with the institutions, RAI will introduce the following actions:

- ✓ Reach out to the priority institutions – targeted approach
- ✓ Introduce proactive communication:
  - o Establish contact points in relevant institutions (PR staff)
  - o When organizing the events, use the opportunity to organize courtesy visits to other institutions
  - o Invite priority/target Institutions (people) to RAI events
  - o Invite other institutions to the Steering Group Meeting
- ✓ Tailor communication towards different audience: senior management, middle management etc.

RAI sometimes must communicate with national Institutions other than the ones in the home affairs sector. Communication with other national institutions will be developed on ad-hoc basis.

3.2 Potential Members and Observers

RAI is open to expending its membership to other counters and relevant organisations. This is also clearly stipulated in RAI Strategic Document[1]:

Benefits from expending the membership base are manifold. The key potential is recognized in enabling organisational growth, diversifying, sharing of experiences, and best practices.

Communication towards potential members must be carefully developed and planned. RAI will also take action towards a broader audience of partners by:

✓ *Communicating and promoting its results and achievements*
   This will be achieved through more frequent use of social media as well as RAI website space, as well as website space of current partners. Another course of action is the use of events and networking opportunities to present and promote the work of the Organisation. This will raise the profile of RAI, and it will attract likeminded entities.
✓ *Engaging in networking activities*
   This will be achieved through using the opportunities such as events, meetings and visits to explore the possibilities of cooperation with other organisations. Potential partners would be invited to attend RAI events. Possibly engaging with potential partners in joint projects.
✓ *Following the work of other organisations – potential partners*
   This will be achieved through subscribing to other organisations newsletters or bulletins, visiting their websites regularly for developments and new projects and providing feedback.

3.3 Partner Organisations

RAI operates in a very vibrant regional and international environment. There are number of partner organisations: regional and international organisations working in the field of anti-corruption.

RAI partners with organisations to share and receive expertize; to make use of existing infrastructures in the region; to avoid overlap and ensure support for own activities; and to jointly prepare project proposals and applications.

RAI's Partners are national institutions, different UN organizations operating in the region, civil society networks and other regional organisations under the umbrella of the SEE 2020 Strategy.

Communication with partners must be strategic and targeted. Some of the key actions in maintaining the relationships include:

✓ Inviting partners to RAI Events;
✓ Exchanging and sharing news and relevant information from partners on RAI website;
✓ Engaging in coordination activities and planning of joint activities;

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[1]*All other countries, organizations or international financial institutions which are actively and substantially engaged in support of preventing and fighting corruption in South Eastern Europe and contributing to the programmatic activities of the RAI with at least the yearly minimum amount determined in the MoU, may participate in RAI Steering Group as Associate Members. The Associate Members will have the same voting rights as the Core Members in relation with the RAI programmatic issues.*
Other interested countries or organizations which are involved in fighting corruption in SEE but not being able to contribute financially to the RAI, or financially participate in RAI activities less than yearly minimum amount determined in the MoU, as well as those organisations that are only implementers of projects related to the RAI activities, may participate in the Steering Group as Observers

✓ Strengthen relationships by formalizing the partnerships (MoUs, membership etc.).

3.4 Civil Society

RAI strives to engage with civil society organisations. The target audience are NGOs, particularly the regional ones as well as coalitions or networks of organisations operating regionally. Another civil society target is academia, particularly researchers, think tanks, academies and institutes in the justice and public administration. Engaging with civil society enables development of constructive dialogue and partnerships. Also it provides access to available expertise, as well as other benefits.

RAI needs to continue to foster dialogue with civil society with following actions:

✓ Acting proactively and getting the CSOs involved;
✓ Using their infrastructure to share information and promote RAI;
✓ Promoting the work and impact of CSOs on RAI website.

3.5 Donors

Donors play a very important role in the work of RAI. RAI's strategic objectives are ambitious and broad, thus demanding additional sources of funding to be fulfilled. RAI Secretariat has already taken action to strengthen its fundraising capacities to adequately answer the challenge of obtaining funding for its activities.

Current social and political context in the region is different and very dynamic compared to couple of years ago. There are less donors and generally less funding being poured into South East Europe. Furthermore, topics of funding have also become competitive. Organisations are competing for scarce financial resources. This compels the organisation to invest additional efforts when presenting to donors and attracting funding.

Donors as a target communication audience differ from other groups because they are not necessarily experts in anti-corruption or home affairs. This entails braking down information to understandable and feasible messages.

Fostering communication with RAI's current donors is stipulated in joint contractual documents. Maintaining current donors requires the organisation to meet the contractual requirements and report regularly. Developing relationship and communication with new and potential donors will entail a different two-prone approach. Increasing RAI visibility and promoting RAI's work and achievements is one way of becoming a potential candidate for funding.

✓ RAI will increase its visibility by promoting the results of the organisation more aggressively. Actions funded by donors and donors will be more prominent.
✓ RAI will seize opportunities to present its work as well as ideas to donors at events and occasions, such as donor conferences and coordination meetings. Organisation will foster dialogue with potential donors at ad hoc occasions.

The second way of communication is targeted communication to a specific donor. Project ideas and project proposals tailored to the objectives and requirements of the respective donor will be developed before communicating to them. Targeted communication will take place only following a detailed analysis of donor's expectations and how RAI can answer identified expectations.

3.6 Media

Media are powerful tool for reaching the wider audience. Managing the communication with media and news organisations effectively requires significant resources and capacities that RAI does not have. However, dissemination of useful information should be a primary aim of any organization's media approach. Therefore, steps need to be taken in order to achieve maximum results in the given circumstances.

There is also an operational perspective, which addresses the concrete procedures that are developed and implemented in order to communicate with media on daily basis or regularly. Secretariat should first decide how much it wants to invest in communicating with media and media relations in general.

Regardless of the direction the Secretariat takes, there are actions that RAI can undertake, such as:

✓ Ensure proactive efforts to package and distribute important information and news in a way that is appealing, understandable and useful to the media.

✓ Information should be publicly available in appropriate formats through appropriate delivery channels, and be written in plain and understandable language adapted to the level of understanding of the general public.

✓ Proactively reach out to and disseminate easy-to-use, meaningful, up-to-date and newsworthy information to the media because their reach and audiences far exceed that of the Secretariat.

RAI recognizes that there are many practical and cultural differences among media spaces in the region and that approaches may vary from country to country. To communicate effectively with the media, Secretariat must understand media community. This understanding calls for an awareness of the types of media in the region, the needs of these media and their coverage area, so that it can provide customized services that meet their various information needs.

4. COMMUNICATION CHANNELS AND TOOLS

RAI has a number of communication tools at its disposal. Some are utilized more than others. Key tool for Secretariat's communication emails, RAI website and social media. Recognizing the importance of Internet as a universal communication channel, RAI Secretariat has undergone a complete restructuring of the site with the objective to make it more user friendly, more approachable and a better resource for anti-corruption community in the region.

Much of the website real-estate is devoted to the news from the region, followed by the *Mapping Anti-Corruption in South East Europe* section and *Knowledge Base*. Secretariat shares corruption stories and news about anti-corruption efforts daily. This helps the website to be current, but it also serves as a two-way communication with the media.

Mapping the anti-corruption actors in South East Europe presents an effort to identify and bring together all relevant anti-corruption actors from the region to one place. This component is envisaged to bring regional stakeholders closer together, and to enable streamlined communication both bilaterally and to wider audience of stakeholders.

Knowledge Base section of the website serves as a resource centre to anti-corruption experts, but also to a wider audience, as it contains up-to-date relevant anti-corruption documents, surveys, reports and RAI publications. It needs regular maintenance and updating.

Online communication has expended recent years to different tools generally recognized as social media. RAI Secretariat has followed this trend and has a Twitter and Facebook account. RAI Secretariat regularly shares the news items and other interesting articles with its online community. RAI Secretariat will also revisit its visual identity and potentially look at options to better position the RAI brand with the target audience.

Another important tool that Secretariat utilizes is conferences and events. At such occasions, RAI pays special attention to visibility.

4.1 News on Website

News that the Secretariat posts on its website is also an important communication instrument. Sharing stories and articles from different sources demonstrates RAI's interest in the work of media. News from the region are given importance, as RAI's website is a unique place where all current anti-corruption related news, developments and information from the entire region can be found. Consequently, it is a tool for anti-corruption experts and wider audience to easily follow what is going on in the region without browsing other sources. This, along with the other website components, has enabled RAI to become and act as a regional Anti-corruption Resource Center for the countries of SEE.

Selection of materials and news to be published is governed by number of principles. Key principles are that the information shared must be newsworthy and timely (published one day before or three days before). Other relevant criteria for publishing are:

✓ News on relevant anti-corruption events organized/participated by RAI (Secretariat and Chairperson);
✓ News aiming to promote RAI member countries in anti-corruption efforts and achieving results on EU accession process (for non EU member countries);
✓ News without political connotations, which do not reflect political issues or anyhow express political attitudes, or have political background;
✓ News / articles on significant corruption cases need to be: impartial, objective, factual and not politically based or oriented;
✓ Avoid an imbalance sensational and predominantly negative news;
✓ News needs to be clear, understandable and concise and refer to the source of information.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITES

In order to implement the Strategy successfully RAI needs to assign roles to all members of the organisation.

5.1 Role of the Secretariat

Secretariat is a focal point of communication on behalf of the Organisation. The role of the Secretariat is to actively promote the organisation and its objectives, seek new partners, engage with stakeholders and media and deliver the key messages.

Secretariat also acts as a provider of technical information and substance related issues in anti-corruption on a regional scale. Secretariat staff attend different events and often speak in a public forums, engage in communication with partners, stakeholders and media. Due to the nature of the work, all Secretariat members would take advantage of any situations to promote RAI and work of the organisation.

Role of the Secretariat is to ensure that the Communication Strategy elements are incorporated in the work of the Organisation.

All staff members play a role in a communication strategy. It is expected that they will all propose improvements or new ideas as to how to enhance the Strategy. They will also play a role in populating the web site with current information as well as news.

5.2 Role of the Steering Group

Assigning roles and responsibilities is necessary in order to keep the communication process running smoothly, and to ensure accountability when implementing the action points from the Strategy.

Chairperson of the Steering Group is a valuable position from a communication aspect. The person in this role is expected to promote RAI and its activities in public events. Furthermore, Chairperson will play a key role in communication towards potential candidate institutions as well as countries. In communication with media, the Chairperson will strive to size opportunity to promote RAI and deliver the key messages.

Senior Representatives and deputy Senior Representatives also play an important role. They shall disseminate relevant information on behalf of the Organisation and news at national level, and also feed the national news to the Secretariat. On a more operational level, if and when the Secretariat is organizing an event in a member country, their inputs and guidance regarding communication of Secretariat at national level would be required. Secretariat will focus on strengthening the operational communication within RAI by utilizing more internet communication tools like Skype.

6. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring implementation of Communication Strategy must be an integral part of the Strategy in order to ensure effective application of planned actions and meeting the objectives. If the Strategy is adequately monitored, feedback will be received that allows for better understanding of whether and how the Strategy is working.

If adopted, RAI Secretariat will develop an Action Plan where agreed action points descending from the Strategy will be further elaborated, and timeframes and responsible persons assigned. The overall monitoring will be conducted by the Secretariat. The Strategy will be monitored regularly and evaluated as a comprising part of Evaluation Report prepared every two years.

It is important to avoid common mistake regarding evaluation of communication strategies—measuring the success of a communication from the sender's point of view (since organisations frequently feel that "we told them" or "we have communicated this with an email, at the event"). In fact, organisations assume the stakeholders got the message because of their high confidence in the development of the message and channels selected to deliver it. There are always opportunities to improve the effective delivery of a message, yet the only way to avoid assumptions of retention is to monitor retention with the receiver. Therefore, RAI Secretariat will seek input from targeted audiences as to how they perceive RAI's communication and whether they have suggestions for improvements.