

Communication Policy and Strategy for the ECOWAS Regional Electricity Regulatory Authority (ERERA)

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

One of the core objectives of the ECOWAS Regional Electricity Regulatory Authority (ERERA) is to ensure the regulation of interstate electricity exchanges and to give appropriate support to national regulatory bodies or entities of the Member States.

In pursuit of this fundamental objective, the ECOWAS specialized institution is expected to enhance public knowledge, awareness and understanding of the regulated sectors of the Authority. ERERA's strategic plan and activity programme (2016-2020) categorically puts more emphasis on the task of informing and engaging the public and its key stakeholders in delivering its services.

This corporate strategic plan stresses the meeting of stakeholders' needs and demands, actively engaging stakeholders and applying technology to enhance the Authority's business operations.

To this end, ERERA must have a clear communications strategy to ensure there is consistency, accuracy, and timely stakeholders' engagement.

This Communications Strategy is designed to optimise ERERA's outreach to stakeholders by promoting greater participation and knowledge sharing. It is also intended to adapt communication systems to enable ERERA to enhance its acceptance as a trusted regional electricity market regulator, foster public knowledge, awareness and understanding of the regulated sector.

It is, therefore, the purpose of this strategy to assist the Communications Unit (CU) handle the communications needs of ERERA as per its mandate and strategic vision.

Consequently, the overall objective is to improve information and knowledge sharing systems for the effectiveness of ERERA's regulatory processes and facilitate the active participation of both internal and external stakeholders; whose right it is to be informed and actively engaged.

1.2. Rationale for ERERA Communications Strategy

ERERA's Vision Statement is to ensure the attainment of the highest standards of regulation to achieve a sustainable and efficient regional electricity market for ECOWAS. The specialized institution's vision is compatible with bringing about regional economic growth, fair competition, the protection of consumers' interests and the availability and affordability of electricity to all consumers including those living in the rural areas.

This main task calls for people-centred communications to engage various stakeholders within ERERA and across the ECOWAS region and beyond.

By encouraging broad participation, the communications strategy will significantly contribute to fostering *transparent, effective, and efficient regulatory processes*.

The 2016-2020 Strategic plan emphasizes the need to increase public knowledge, awareness and understanding of regulatory functions in the enhanced regulated regional electricity market. It is, therefore, imperative that a communications strategy be developed and regularly revised to complement ERERA's Strategic Plan.

1.3. Situational Analysis

The study conducted between May and June 2021 via desk review of documents, media audit, including ERETA's communication directive, SWOT analysis and administration of a questionnaire to the Communication Specialists Network sought, among other things, to:

- analyse the environment and the regional and institutional context of the the energy sector, in particular as they are linked to ERETA's activities,
- identify potential challenges and explore possible solutions,
- assess existing resources in communication and identify opportunities.

The study also aimed at establishing baseline information on the level of stakeholders' engagement and satisfaction with ERETA's regulatory services including the extent of public awareness on the roles and functions of the Authority.

The situational analysis provided information to establish baseline data on customer satisfaction and opinions on ERETA's regulatory services. The information gained was used to update the stakeholders' profiles, position ERETA to engage its audiences and determine the use of most effective communication channels in reaching out to identified audiences considering their information needs, expectations, and interests.

The analysis also informs the process of developing the present ERETA Communication and Policy Strategy (CPS).

1.3.1. Stakeholder Analysis

Trans-border electricity trade faces unique challenges concerning public understanding and acceptance. It is generally recognised that access to reliable and affordable electricity contribute significantly to the well-being of society through the generation of electrical energy, thus fostering economic development and reducing poverty.

The ultimate success of an integrated cross-border electricity trade requires long term political and economic commitment. It is highly technological and heavily dependent on acceptance by a myriad of stakeholders to bring about the delivery of reliable and affordable energy to consumers in the ECOWAS region. Achieving this success makes clear understanding or outright support by the general public difficult to obtain.

If integrated cross-border electricity trade is to succeed and develop beyond current levels, there must be a common understanding of the associated issues among all stakeholders; both those immediately affected by proposed or operating facilities and those who simply benefit from them indirectly.

Such understanding cannot exist without the availability of balanced information and appropriate stakeholder involvement in the decision-making process. Increased public participation in decisions can promote a greater degree of understanding of the issues and can help to develop an appreciation of the actual risks and benefits of integrated cross-border electricity trade. It is, therefore, vital to provide suitable opportunities for stakeholders to participate.

In general, through this communication strategy, public involvement will be best achieved at this stage primarily through open and honest dialogue between proponents of the integrated transborder electricity trade, (ERETA, National Governments, consumers, regulators/operators, Technical & Financial Partners (TFPs)) and other stakeholders.

All concerned citizens shall be provided with relevant information and have opportunities to participate in the integrated transborder electricity dialogue.

The considerable benefit will be gained by working consistently with more local, often low profile, community groups and organizations, to gain their understanding and trust. Another

important aspect of decision making in this stage is that all stakeholders shall be clear as to what their involvement can achieve and how their opinions will be taken into consideration.

Table 1 below captures various stakeholders' categories and lists their needs and expectations.

Table 1: Stakeholders' categories and lists their needs and expectations.

SPECIFIC STAKEHOLDERS	NEEDS/EXPECTATIONS
ECOWAS Institutions and agencies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECOWAS Commission • ECOWAS Court of Justice • ECOWAS Parliament • West African Power Pool (WAPP) • ECREEE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fulfilment of the ECOWAS mandate • Effective regulatory framework • Facilitation of regional integration projects • Facilitation of regional electricity infrastructure projects and development of the Regional Electricity Market • Facilitation of renewable energy and energy efficiency • Regular Performance Reports • Development and harmonization of regulatory framework • Fair and prompt resolution of disputes
ERERA Regulatory Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a reputation for independence and professionalism • Compliance with and effective enforcement of ERERA-issued directives and regulations. • Regular performance reports • Prudent use of resources (especially financial resources) • The Institution achieves its objectives. • Good governance
International Organisations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical and Financial Partners • Bilateral Donors • Other Development Partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of their support for development
Government Agencies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. • Ministry of Trade. • Ministry of Energy. • Ministry of Transport & Infrastructure • Ministry of Finance and Planning • Ministry of Foreign Affairs • Ministry of Regional Integration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective implementation of the Acts and Regulations on Electricity • Accountability on financial resources • Effective implementation of directives • Effective consultation on policy development • Effective implementation of policies • Feedback on policy implementation through appropriate reporting
National Regulators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring and facilitating harmonisation of national and regional electricity regulations and policies.

SPECIFIC STAKEHOLDERS	NEEDS/EXPECTATIONS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guaranteed compatibility between national and regional laws • Monitoring of effective implementation of directives • Monitoring & Feedback on policy implementation through appropriate reporting
Market Operators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standardization of technical operating parameters for regional interconnection • Availability of market requirements & information (technical & Regulations) • Compliance with the regulatory framework • Availability & Facilitation of rules and regulation • Timely resolution of disputes.
Electricity Consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder engagements • Affordable tariffs • Electricity access and available energy
Investors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stable policy and enabling business environment. • Return on investment.
Regional Governments and authorities: Regions affected by electricity generation and distribution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling Acts and Regulations • Public awareness and education • Good policy and procedures

1.3.2. Key Findings

There were two key findings, one being on the stakeholders' engagement on the services offered by ERERA and the other being on the effectiveness of ERERA's communication efforts whose results have been highlighted below:

1.3.2.1. Stakeholders' satisfaction with the services offered by ERERA.

While ERERA's mission is presently limited to the following stakeholders: ECOWAS Institutions, Governments, Operators (including eligible consumers), Investors, Regulators, Technical and Financial Partners (TFPs). The institution, in its effort to make electricity available and cheap, concedes the responsibility of direct contact with the consumers in the different member countries to the national regulators.

ERERA is perceived by stakeholders as an organisation that makes most of its decisions in favour of the corporate players than the common people.

Given that a consultative committee of consumers is yet to be constituted, no light can be shed on the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the customers vis a vis ERERA's activities mainly in terms of dispute resolution mechanism.

1.3.2.2. ERERA's communication efforts

Internally, the information flow and sharing at ERERA are far from being optimal which means staff members often have little knowledge of meetings and other vital information within the organisation.

Presently, ERERA deploys email, phone calls, memos, circulars, and newsletters as channels to communicate important information to its staff members.

It neither has an intranet system nor regular sessions of town hall meetings between senior management and other staff members for information exchange.

At this time, ERERA has no official presence on the social media network, which limits its capacity to effectively engage with external audiences.

While the benefits of the cross-border electricity trade and ERERA brand need to be promoted among national authorities, operators, regulators (and with their support & collaboration), consumers, within ECOWAS using the media, as privileged allies in achieving this task, demands a functional media relations effort.

The current media relations capacity of ERERA need to be reassessed in areas of adequate staffing and capacity building. Efforts should be geared towards the recruitment of additional staff that will effectively engage ERERA's myriad of stakeholders and differentiated external audiences at an optimal level.

ERERA currently has a one-man communication team. In an ideal situation, ERERA should not only have at its disposal a functional communication team that will oversee media relations, website maintenance, content development (digital photography, video, and graphic design) but also a capacity building programme for the communication team.

While ERERA' activities are often covered by the media on a one-off basis, there is no formal sustainable partnership with the regional media hub which would have guaranteed the regular promotion of the institution's activities to its external audiences and key stakeholders.

2. EXAMINING ERERA COMMUNICATIONS THROUGH SWOT ANALYSIS

This chapter summarizes ERERA's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) in implementing communication initiatives based on the evidence drawn from the study mentioned in the previous section.

2.1. Strengths

Areas that demonstrated strength and are likely to enhance the ERERA communications system include formal communication; leadership commitment; whereby there is an appreciable level of public awareness; potential for productive use of modern technology; and the existence of an ERERA Communication Specialists Network dedicated to promoting the institution's values coupled with strong and committed human resources.

2.2. Weaknesses

Despite notable strengths, the situational analysis listed areas of weaknesses that could impede the sustainability of effectiveness of ERERA's communications. The weaknesses include insufficient delivery of regulated services; less than optimal engagement with the mainstream media, insufficient staffing of the communication unit; and lack of communication monitoring & evaluation (M&E) systems.

2.3. Opportunities

There are viable opportunities internally and externally for the ERERA Communications Unit to fulfil its obligations to ensure public access to information, increase collaboration with both internal and external stakeholders, and strengthen the efficiency, quality and quantity of its products and services.

A key platform within the ERERA structure worth looking into is the relationship between ERERA Headquarters, regulated Service Providers/Operators and the yet to be constituted ERERA Consultative Committee of Consumers.

ERERA, being an autonomous specialized institution of the ECOWAS, has facilitated stakeholder's engagement through transparency, accountability, and good governance.

Working within and in synergy with the ECOWAS institutions and its agencies (ECOWAS Commission, West African Power Pool (WAPP), ECREEE, ECOWAS Court of Justice, ECOWAS Parliament, etc.) places ERERA in a favourable commercial position and also offers the Authority with the opportunity of utilising Information Technology (IT) to strengthen efficiency and the quality of its products and services.

2.4. Challenges

There are internal and external challenges that ERERA needs to transform into opportunities.

Overseeing and sanctioning participants in a Cross-Border Trade in Electricity project can be especially difficult, as countries are often unwilling to bind themselves to a common enforcement mechanism.

Being a regional market regulator, ERERA deals with the interests, expectations and information needs of various stakeholders which in return affects its **perception** by the public, diversified and fragmented audiences.

Managing this perception is certain to increase the Authority's communication budget since it is consequently constrained to use various channels of communications in reaching out to its stakeholders irrespective of their geographic location.

ERERA's Communication Unit, therefore, has to bridge the gap between the members of its Regulatory Council and corporate stakeholders who are mainly Ministers, Members of Parliament, corporate chief executives etc., whose **TRUST** depend on the position of Officeholder.

For this reason, it is desirable to elevate the Communications Unit to a higher level, to lend more weight to the communications system and thus enhance the Authority's functions.

2.5. Transformation of ERERA Communications approach

Based on the *Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats* (SWOT) analysis presented in this chapter, recommendations are summarized for the next phase of a communications strategy to bring together current opposing and supporting factors to enhance ERERA's capacity to communicate with its internal and external stakeholders.

The institution's formal communication system provides staff with opportunities to interact at all times. The ultimate goal is to ensure that all voices are heard to harness organization-wide participation. The current communication scenario has to be maintained to strengthen cohesion between internal and external stakeholders.

The support from the organization's top management and substantial financial resources allocated to the presently understaffed Communication Unit are essential inputs to address challenges faced by the Unit. These resources provide vital motivation for the Unit to strengthen communication functions and systems. For best results, top management must reinvigorate the current support to enable the Unit to perform its functions at an optimal level.

To a large extent, ERERA's awareness has been achieved, as a result, its corporate identity is widely recognised. Mechanisms to support engagement are not only critical to increase commitment among the key stakeholders and the public, but they also actively contribute to ERERA's delivery strategy. Additionally, ERERA needs to enhance the use of Information, Communication Technology (ICT) particularly by showing a more visible presence on social media platforms and adopting innovative communication practices.

Human resource development also provides a fertile ground to strengthen meaningful communication within the organization. It was revealed in the consultation with internal stakeholders that recruited employees are skilled, committed, motivated and comfortable with the work environment. In the future, ERERA needs to review the Communication Unit structure to include corporate functions that necessitate the formation of the Division of Corporate Communications.

2.6. Overall Objective

To involve stakeholders in the promotion of an integrated cross-border electricity trade within the ECOWAS bloc, communicate and campaign on the benefits of the initiative for sustainable development of the region.

2.6.1. Strategic Pillars

The **Communication Policy and Strategy of ERETA** will be operationalised through the following strategic pillars (objectives):

S/N	Focus Area	Strategic Goal
1	Optimizing ERETA regulatory functions and responsibilities.	Raise Public Awareness level on Benefit, Risks and Safety of Integrated Cross-Border Electricity Market to 80 per cent by June 2024.
2	Optimizing ERETA communication capacity to deliver its mandate and functions.	Build ERETA's communication culture and staff capacity to create enabling policymaking and business environment to 70 per cent by June 2023.
3	Optimizing ERETA's stakeholder engagement and advocacy Mandates and Functions.	Deliver exceptional customer service through public/stakeholders' engagement and operation of an information centre by June 2024.
4	Optimizing ERETA Mandate and Functions.	Generate and sustain stakeholders' interest in the functioning and development of the regional electricity market by June 2023
5	Optimizing ERETA Mandate and Functions.	Secure donor and investor confidence in profitability in the development of the regional electricity market by June 2023
6	Optimizing ERETA Mandate and Functions.	Devise innovative communication tactics for efficient and effective institutional service delivery of ERETA core functions, processes, and services by June 2024.

2.6.2. Key Communication Actions

- Inform the National Governments, decision-makers, and the public at large about the advantages derived from integrated cross-border electricity trade and help to make informed decisions related to its successful implementation.
- Identify and advise the ERETA management on lobbying investors for integrated cross-border electricity trade.
- Strengthen ERETA's capacity to pursue corporate identity positioning, media relations, public engagement activities, advertising, promotional items, events management, and productive internal communication.
- Communicate on integrated cross-border electricity trade and be prepared to communicate in a time of crisis.
- Develop new approaches to advocate electricity trade regulation compliance, opportunities, and challenges in the ECOWAS bloc.
- Communicate best practices in integrated cross-border electricity trade.
- Participate actively in national and international activities related to the West African integrated cross-border electricity trade.
- Organise forums to engage and inform the general public on both competitive and regulated cross-border electricity markets.
- Build up a repository of a brochure for handouts in information and digital campaigns.

- Develop promotional tools, exhibition materials, webpages, e-mail information networks, presentation materials, brand management, national events, achievements, and success stories to sensitize mass media, public and potential end-users on positive image ERERA.
- Ensure presence on and monitor corporate social media channels in collaboration with strategic services.
- Carry out corporate photography and image management.
- Undertake media and trend monitoring as well as general public enquiries and reception services.
- Develop communication goals designed to improve and integrate effective communication at all levels and that are tied to ERERA strategic objectives.

3. ERERA KEY AUDIENCES

This chapter defines **ERERA**'s key audiences, which are divided into two groups of primary and secondary target audiences as shown in the diagram below.

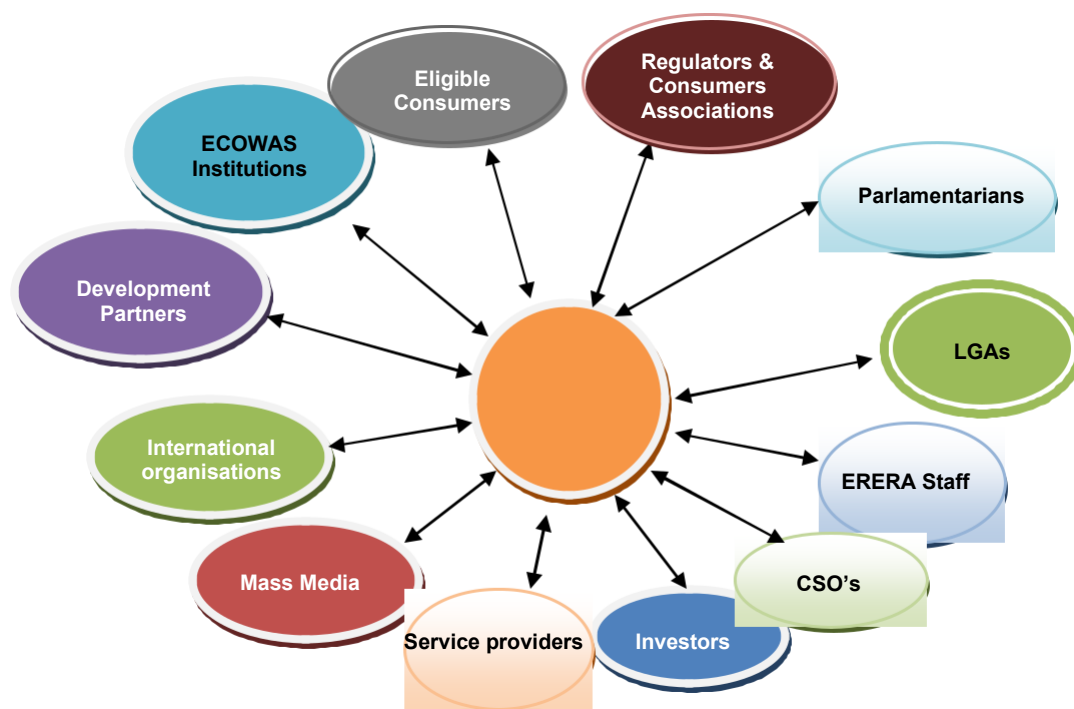


Figure 1: ERERA's Key Audiences

3.1. Primary Audiences

Primary audiences are those whose functions and responsibilities directly concern, influence, or affect the survival, effectiveness as well as efficiency of ERERA. These include ERERA Staff, the WAPP, Regional Electricity Market participants (usually all electricity operators in the region including national utilities), National Regulators, National Governments specially Ministries in charge of Energy, ECOWAS institutions linked to ERERA (in particular the ECOWAS Commission, the ECOWAS Council of Ministers, the ECOWAS Court of Justice, ECREEE in particular). A brief account of the profiles of each public, their views on ERERA, expectations as well as their communication needs are given below:

3.1.1. ERERA Staff

ERERA staff have knowledge and experience to implement programmes of action as outlined in the Authority's Strategic Plan. They are part and parcel of ERERA's operations, challenges, problems, successes as well as future.

Harmonious relations and a smooth flow of communication within the organisation is key to the successful implementation of the Strategic Plan.

Certainly, ERERA staff are well informed about their organisation, positive about its operations and believe that ERERA is a trusted organisation despite the challenging environment under which it operates.

Despite this, one is inclined to believe that ERERA employees, like their counterparts from other organisations, will expect from ERERA Senior Management transparent, effective, and efficient performance management systems, attractive remuneration packages and timely payment, conducive working environment, timely provision of state-of-the-art working tools, enhanced

capacity building to staff, job security and transparent staff appraisal systems, staff participation; and sharing of information and timely feedback.

3.1.2. National Governments/LGAs and other government institutions

The National Government is the main policymaker and overall overseer of how policies and laws are observed in each country that is a member of ECOWAS.

All National Governments are responsible for planning and ensuring the development of infrastructure and the creation of an enabling working environment. It is also interested in attracting investors in the regulated sectors.

The National Government and its Institutions including LGAs expect:

- ❖ Professional advice from ERERA.
- ❖ Implementation of the sector policies and Acts.
- ❖ Value for money and legal compliance in all ERERA-issued directives and operations.
- ❖ Good governance practices.
- ❖ Efficiency in performing regulatory functions – including effective enforcement of quality service provision in the regulated sector.
- ❖ Timely provision of accurate information for decision making.
- ❖ Creating an enabling environment for the promotion of investments in the regulated sectors.
- ❖ Alignment of the technical and economic regulation programme with the national agenda on promoting an industrial economy.
- ❖ Transparency and professionalism in conducting regulatory functions and promptly rendering professional advice on matters falling under ERERA
- ❖ Effectiveness and efficiency in the provision of regulatory services.

3.1.3. ERERA's Service Providers/Operators

These are stakeholders who provide services and products that are necessary for the Regulator to fulfil its obligations efficiently.

ERERA's Service Providers/Operators expect:

- ❖ Transparency and active engagement
- ❖ Impartiality.
- ❖ Professionalism and integrity.
- ❖ Consistency and timely response to queries and inquiries

3.1.4. Investors

Investors help the economy to grow and the regulated sectors to expand. They produce the much-needed goods and services in the regulated sectors and pay taxes. These include electricity, petroleum, and natural gas suppliers who are key stakeholders of ERERA's regulatory functions. ERERA would therefore be expected to advocate for an enabling legal and stable business environment that would promote the least-cost investment in the regulated sectors.

Investors expect:

- ❖ Conducive legal and business environment.
- ❖ Fair and reliable regulatory processes.
- ❖ Transparency, credibility, consistency.
- ❖ Balanced interests.
- ❖ Timely decision making
- ❖ Fair returns on investments
- ❖ The level playing field in the regulated sectors.

3.2. Secondary Audiences

Secondary audiences are those individuals who may indirectly receive a copy of communication. These include anyone who will receive a copy, need to approve, will hear about, or be affected by ERERA's message . These include the following: -

3.2.1. Other Institutions

Some institutions are close stakeholders because their functions relate to ERERA's mandate such as the yet to be constituted ERERA Consumer Consultative Committee (ERERA CCC).

They have knowledge and experience on regulatory issues and challenges facing regulated sectors. For instance, some regulated service providers and operators are more than likely to seek the advisory and capacity building services/support of ERERA, whenever there is a dispute relating to unfair competition. Regular communications with these bodies are crucial for a more informed ERERA and proactive regulatory initiatives.

Other Institutions expect:

- ❖ Collaboration, knowledge sharing, bench-marking.
- ❖ Harmonisation of policy and legislation, procedures, and standards.
- ❖ Timely provision of accurate information.

3.2.2. Consumers: (eligible consumers)

These are the ultimate users and consumers of the regulated services which in the main is reliable, cheap, and affordable electricity. Consumers of the regulated services need to be further endowed with knowledge, awareness and understanding of the ERERA-regulated and integrated cross-border electricity market sectors.

Consumers expect:

- ❖ To know their rights and obligations
- ❖ Protection of their interests
- ❖ Fair, affordable prices/charges of regulated services
- ❖ Quality and reliable services from service providers.
- ❖ Impartiality, fairness, and timely decision.
- ❖ Available, quality, and reliable services from Service Providers/Operators
- ❖ Safe, quality and environmentally friendly service delivery infrastructure.

3.2.3. Academic and Research Institutions

These institutions research issues about regulated sectors and provide input into policy formulation. Research institutions, therefore, serve as a repository for useful information to ERERA as well as the regulated stakeholders. Regular flow of information is crucial to ensure ERERA keep abreast with new developments in the sectors it regulates.

Academic and Research Institutions expect:

- ❖ Correct and accurate data.
- ❖ Partnership in research and use of knowledge from findings.
- ❖ Partnership in research and use of their research knowledge/findings.

3.2.4. Parliamentarians

Politicians enact laws that may have an impact on the development of the regulated sector. Politicians are interested in increased investments in the regulated sectors to stimulate economic growth as well as to provide jobs. They are also interested in ensuring that they protect the interest of their voters and constituencies.

Politicians can be quite useful – and equally inimical – to ERERA’s image in the following ways:

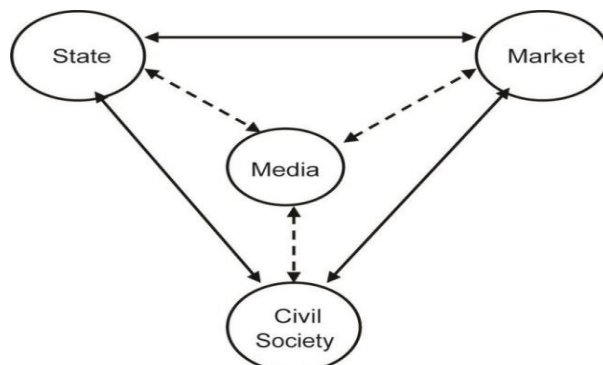
- If they are informed of what ERERA does; if they believe that ERERA is doing a good job; if ERERA’s role does not affect their voters; then they will promote and defend the Regulator.
- If they are ill-informed (or if they act on the information provided to them by a disgruntled party), they can easily damage the reputation of the Regulator.

Politicians expect:

- ❖ Expanded coverage of regulated services.
- ❖ Affordable regulated services for their voters.
- ❖ Sustainable and reliable access to regulated services.
- ❖ Regular briefing or information and knowledge sharing on ERERA’s operations.
- ❖ Increased coverage of service.
- ❖ Available, quality, affordable and reliable services from Service Providers
- ❖ Timely and impartial regulatory decisions
- ❖ Accurate information and knowledge

3.2.5. Civil Society Organizations

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are regarded as important institutions because they provide space for citizens to aggregately advocate for, defend or promote certain civic rights for the good of individuals as well as society as a whole.



Undeniably, this explains why civil society organisations are always keen on opposing any policy action that appears to affect ordinary citizens (i.e., tariff hikes in electricity). CSOs that defend the interests of ordinary citizens tend to be popular with the media and may as they often do – initiate debates that put ERETA in a negative light.

On the other hand, the CSOs are of the view that ERETA needs to enhance accessibility to its information on policy issues, tariffs, services, plans as well as operations. The CSOs also believe that institutions like ERETA must engage citizens in the debate on issues that affect their welfare.

Civil Society Organisations expect:

- ❖ Transparency and impartiality.
- ❖ The regular and timely flow of information.
- ❖ Initiatives targeting the poor and the disadvantaged communities.
- ❖ To be involved and consulted on issues of policy that may have implications for consumers.
- ❖ Transparency and impartiality in conducting ERETA's functions.
- ❖ Consultation and involvement in some of the regulatory processes.

3.2.6. Mass Media

The mass media remain an indispensable ally in enhancing public awareness as well as in providing citizen education. They also provide a convenient mechanism for quick feedback. The mass media inform the general public, educate, or clarify issues, provide the fora for stakeholders to pass on their messages and also act as watchdogs of society.

Mass media have the potential to destroy an institution's reputation unexpectedly while at the same time they can maintain a status quo of the image of an organisation. Understanding the media landscape in the ECOWAS region and how it operates is key to any organisation's survival.

The media (i.e., radio, television, newspapers, online or *new media*), have unique characteristics that determine who have access to them and how. It is important to understand these characteristics and how they determine the effectiveness of institutional communication.

Mass Media Expect:

- ❖ Timely dissemination of accurate information.
- ❖ Access to information of public interest.
- ❖ Regular engagement with ERERA for knowledge sharing.
- ❖ Openness and cooperation in issues of national/public interest
- ❖ Active participation in the regulatory processes to enhance knowledge.
- ❖ Involvement in public awareness and marketing campaign orchestration

4. KEY MESSAGES AND COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

This chapter presents key messages and communication channels. An integral part of key messages that ERETA should disseminate is the institution's positioning statement.

A good positioning statement is about identifying the experience which the institution wants its customers and stakeholders to have and guide the internal teams who make this experience happen. It is important here to think about the value ERETA brings to its customers and what makes its product and service offerings unique. Below is a proposition.

Positioning Statement

"At ERETA, we're committed to creating a better, more sustainable future for ECOWAS citizens and communities through the facilitation of access to reliable and affordable electricity and regulation of integrated cross-border electricity trade."

4.1. Key messages

In crafting key messages, special attention should be paid to identifying cross-cutting themes that best position ERETA's corporate identity.

The principal purpose in restricting the number of priority themes is to help emphasize the most important information that needs to be conveyed to the differentiated audiences unambiguously. Consequently, the key messages presented in this strategy are intended for use on ERETA's communication products and during awareness campaigns. These messages reflect on opinions of both internal and external stakeholders on communication and operational related issues.

The messages are designed not only to persuade individuals to change any negative perceptions toward ERETA but also, they are engaging messages, intended to inform and educate both internal and external stakeholders on ERETA services, benefits of cross-border electricity market or challenge them to think outside their comfort zones.

The messages should be delivered within the unique needs and context of the end-users. ERETA should maintain consistency while delivering its messages and why they exist. That is, the role of the regulator is to regulate the operations of service providers to ensure the end-users benefit from the quality and affordable services.

The key messages are: -

1. ERETA is West Africa's Trusted Regulator and cooperates with the public to enhance better regulatory functions.
2. ERETA enhances the availability, accessibility, and affordability of regulated electricity services to all.
3. ERETA decisions are transparent, predictable, and participatory; and guided by the rule of law.
4. ECOWAS citizens are fortunate to have a regulated electricity market.
5. Increasing cross-border trade in electricity in West Africa goes a long way to address the challenges of lack of access to energy, foster economic development and significantly reduce poverty.
6. Energy is a governance issue – Be accountable!
7. Regions with low-cost generation resources could become net exporters of power, while electricity customers in high-cost areas could benefit from cheaper imports.

4.2. Communication Channels

This strategy includes multiple channels beyond the traditional communication channels. Figure: 2 presents three categories of media notably paid, earned, and owned media. Examples

are provided on how to utilize the potential of each category so that they complement one another.

Important consideration must also be given to which media and how much content production will be done in-house and how much will be contracted out to external service providers.

Each approach has its costs, advantages, and disadvantages... In owned media, it is desirable to add the ERERA website which is the institution’s window to the outside world.

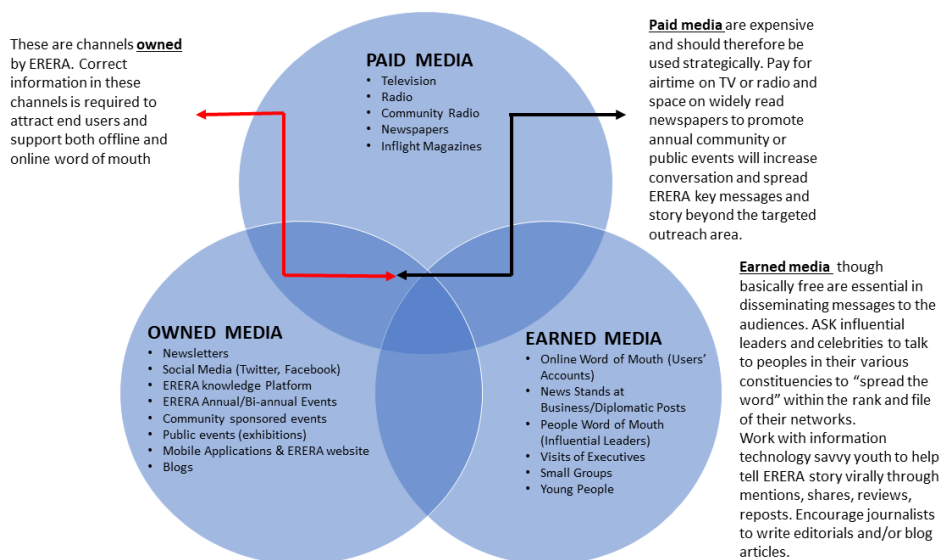


Figure 2: Proposed Communication Channels

4.3. Major Communication and Engagement Tools

Effective communication in an organization increases productivity decreases employee turnover and improves interactivity. The following are major communication means that will be employed.

<p>Mass communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email • Intranet postings • Newsletters • Video conferences • Webcasts 	<p>Public Relations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event/Stunt • Endorsements • Telephone calls • Conferences
<p>Interactive communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email address for questions and answers • Website pages for Q&A (e. g discussion boards, SharePoint) • Frequently asked questions 	<p>Press</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press release • Radio • Opinion editorial • Features • Feature advisories
<p>Face-to-face communication and dialogue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal meetings • Team meetings • One-to-one meetings • Forums/professional meeting 	<p>Online</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other media websites • Multimedia; video, slideshows • Email newsletter

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information session • Workshops 	
Traditional media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Print • Radio • Television • News Agencies 	Print <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brochures • Posters • Fact sheets • Policy Briefs • Letters • Leaflets • Business reports

4.4. Communication and Engagement Methods

Communication Method	Audience	Communication Frequency	Measure of Effectiveness	Responsibility
Email	Stakeholders	Weekly/Daily	Timely delivery of Information	Director-General Council Members Director Communications Officer
Intranet	Internal stakeholders	Weekly email updates and any other relevant information	Number of hits	IT Official
Email addresses for Q&A	Stakeholders	Daily	Number of questions and response time	IT Official
FAQs	Stakeholders	Weekly updates	Number of hits	IT Official
Informal meetings- lunches/morning teas	Team/External stakeholders	Weekly, informal communication	Level of engagement	Director Communications Officer
Team meetings	Team	Fortnightly	Action and reporting	Team Leaders
One-to-one meetings and workshops	Clients/stakeholders/ decision-makers	Regular	Level of engagement	Director-General Directors Communications Officer
Annual meetings and workshops	Clients/stakeholders/ decision-makers	Experts and consultation meeting	Attendance, quantity and	Director-General Directors

Communication Method	Audience	Communication Frequency	Measure of Effectiveness	Responsibility
			quality feedback received	
Video conference	Team members/collaborators/decision-makers at remote sites	Per schedule	Attendance, quantity and quality feedback received	Director-General Directors Communications Officer

4.5. Implementation Plan

The implementation of this strategy should be a coordinated, synchronized, and interactive decision-making process that responds to ERERA's regulatory functions. These must cover knowing what to do – and *accomplishing* them. Therefore, during the implementation of this strategy, the following should be seriously considered: -

- I. ERERA Management should develop a fundamental shift of mindset to create a more effective and dynamic communications thrust. This essentially means that all Communications and Public Relations functions should no longer be considered as business as customary. Everyone involved in the implementation of this strategy should act in a way that will move ERERA in line with its strategic plan and the application of modern communications practices and know-how.
- II. There should be a sense of urgency, in implementing the strategy. Timeliness, precision, and clarity of facts are key issues to consider. ERERA should also monitor the activities, to determine what is working and what is not; establish the reasons and take appropriate corrective actions when need be.
- III. In addition, the implementation of this strategy should be sequential to make it easier for ERERA to manage and monitor planned activities set for each target. As much as possible, realistic budgets should be clearly defined as well, while monitoring and evaluation of the strategy should be emphasized and supervised in the entire implementation of this strategy. The evaluation report should comply with ERERA reporting procedures.
- IV. Implementing an effective communication strategy can be expensive and a challenge for an organization to find enough resources to execute it. Therefore, ERERA management must make available adequate financial arrangements to facilitate the smooth operation of the Communication Strategy.
- V. A three-year timeframe has been set for the implementation of this strategy. However, most of the implementation activity will take place in the first and the second. It provides a rigorous for the selection and monitoring of knowledge investments while being flexible and adaptable, as it fits in Communication Unit operations. The third year is meant for follow up which will also allow adequate time for monitoring and evaluation.
- VI. The implementation of this strategy should be accomplished through maintaining relationships and teamwork. An important component of the Communication Unit's responsibilities will be to forge strong relationships with both internal and external stakeholders and the public at large.
- VII. The communication strategy should promote ERERA regulatory functions, to all stakeholders, make them aware of how they are impacted and how they can

participate. Every tool in the communications implementation kit should be employed to reach out to all ERECA stakeholders and the public at large

Table 2 Framework Matrix of Focus Areas, Goals, Strategic Objectives, Strategies, Targets, Activities & Key Performance Indicators.

Focus Area: Optimizing ERERA regulatory functions and responsibilities.						
Strategy Goal 1: Raise Public Awareness on Benefit, Risks and Safety of Integrated Cross-Border Electricity Market.						
Strategic Objective	Strategy	Target	Activities	Key Performance Indicator	Player	Time Frame
1. To enhance public awareness and reduce public misconception on risks and benefits of integrated cross-border electricity market	Conduct public awareness campaign and stakeholders engagement on benefits and risks of Integrated cross-border electricity market.	All stakeholders negative public perception on the risks and benefits of Integrated cross-border electricity market decreased by 60%.	<p>Formulate and implement public awareness programmes.</p> <p>Establish and implement functioning public education mechanism within ERERA</p> <p>Develop a dynamic ERERA website</p> <p>Conduct seminars. TV and radio shows, workshops, interactive web and social media events, meetings and exhibitions.</p> <p>Participate actively in national and international events.</p> <p>Develop exhibition, promotional materials, events and digital tools.</p>	<p># of publics outreach programmes conducted.</p> <p># of programmes addressing the energy needs of the people.</p> <p>Public acceptance of the integrated cross-border electricity market</p> <p># of people attending organized events</p> <p>Reach, prominence of positive media coverage of ERERA-organised events</p>	Communications Officer (Lead)	4 Years

Focus Area: Optimizing ERERA Mandate and Functions. Strategy Goal 2: Develop communication culture by building the capacity of ERERA Communication staff to create enabling policymaking and business environment.						
Strategic Objective	Strategy	Target	Activities	Key Performance Indicator	Player	Time Frame
Create enabling policy and business environment through the dissemination of consistent, timely information to decision-makers and the public	<p>Establish communication plans and key messages as part of ERERA's procedures and services.</p> <p>Develop communication protocols; define clear tasks and workflow processes</p>	<p>Effectively capitalize on staff skills to better manage communication.</p> <p>Decision-makers, Public.</p> <p>Parliamentarians Ministers of Energy & Trade</p>	<p>Partner with ERERA management and all departments to work collaboratively and proactively in advancing communication objectives.</p> <p>Hold periodic meetings to discuss corporate communication, goals, objective, projects and events.</p> <p>Promote and market ERERA's services to all internal and external audiences, launch public information and contact centre activities.</p> <p>Engage technology-savvy youth to tell the ERERA story via social media platforms.</p> <p>Organise high profile advocacy visits to, Legislature in three ECOWAS countries</p>	<p>Communication needs identified.</p> <p># of meetings, workshops and events held.</p> <p>Reported # of satisfied clients & stakeholders on ERERA's services.</p> <p># of information materials produced and distributed by type.</p> <p># of visits conducted. -Reach of media coverage Rate of compliance with ERERA directives</p>	<p>Communications Officer (Lead)</p> <p>Director-General</p> <p>Director</p>	4 Years

Focus Area: Optimizing ERERA Mandate and Functions.						
Strategic Goal 4: Generate and sustain stakeholders' interest in the functioning and development of the regional electricity market.						
Strategic Objective	Strategy	Target	Activities	Key Performance Indicator	Player	Time Frame
1. Generating the interest and enthusiasm of the target audience to participate in the proper functioning and development of the regional electricity market. <i>(Stakeholder Communication and Engagement)</i>	Organise online and face-to-face events that promote the regional electricity market.	Utility companies,	Leveraging influencers for the invitation of audiences to participate via online channels by submitting questions, suggestions, comments, and feedback.	# of attendees at organized events	Communications Officer	4 Years
		Independent marketers		# of event-related posts on social media		
		Investors	Establish partnerships with speakers and sponsors to conduct surveys, polls, and studies, or provide audience questionnaires.	Reach and penetration of event media coverage.		
		National Operators		# of fact sheets brochures produced and distributed.		
		Eligible Consumers		Creation of useful and relevant content for social media outreach via Hashtags		
		Residential & Domestic Electricity Consumers	Strategic placement of advertisements on digital billboards.			
		Consumers Associations				
Government Functionaries						

Focus Area: Optimizing ERERA Mandate and Functions.						
Strategic Goal 5: Secure donor and investor confidence in profitability in the development of the regional electricity market.						
Strategic Objective	Strategy	Target	Activities	Key Performance Indicator	Player	Time Frame
Motivating and reassuring donors and investors regarding their participation and the protection of their funds and investments. <i>(Strategic Partnership Building and Market Promotion)</i>	Emphasize to donors and investors ERERA's growth mindset anchored on the belief that its reputation, talents, abilities, and intelligence can be improved over time.	Donors Investors Chambers of Commerce.	<p>Creation and publicizing of an online ERERA profile on LinkedIn AngelList: a United Kingdom investment website or in-person.</p> <p>Preparation of Pitch Decks to targeted investors/donors.</p> <p>demonstrating ERERA's organised clean and clear balance sheet.</p> <p>Organisation of face-to-face or video meetings.</p> <p>Dissemination of bi-weekly short messages on key regional electricity market issues and news.</p> <p>Dispatch of targeted monthly metrics update.</p>	<p>Donor retention rate</p> <p>Average donor growth.</p> <p>Average donation growth.</p> <p>Gifts/Donations Secured,</p> <p>Donors/Investors Diversity.</p> <p>Cost per Euro raised</p> <p>Return on Investment.</p> <p>Conversion Rate</p>	<p>Communications Officer.</p> <p>Donor/Investment Relations Officer</p> <p>Fundraising Team Lead</p>	4 Years

Focus Area: Optimizing ERERA Mandate and Functions.						
Strategic Goal 6: Innovative communication tactics for efficient and effective institutional service delivery of ERERA core functions, processes, and services by June 2024						
Strategic Objective	Strategy	Target	Activities	Key Performance Indicator	Player	Time Frame
1. Support and engage with internal and external partners, including the Government, decision-makers Parliamentarians, and the media.	Effectively communicate messages on ERERA's core activities of regulating cross-border electricity exchanges, creating an enabling investment environment for regional power projects and providing technical support to national regulators of the electricity sector of ECOWAS Member States. Stay up to date with current communication practices and seek out new trends to ensure ERERA communications remain innovative and forward-thinking.	National regulators Government Decision-makers, Parliamentarians Media.	Establish a communications plan and key messages for strengthening our ERERA's activities. Communicate events, initiatives, and services through social media, digital marketing, the website and all other media relations to promote the cross-border electricity trade. Review other institutions' communication models for best practices, new trends and innovative ideas. Use more video media releases on high-profile projects and initiatives. Implement media online monitoring and analytic tools.	# of events. Reports. Web, TV, Radio, and Social media hits.	Communications Officer. Director-General	3 Years

<p>2. Develop a Communication Standards, procedures, and manuals to guide ERERA's use of its visual identity.</p>	<p>Develop communication goals designed to improve and integrate effective communication at all levels and that are tied to ERERA strategic directions.</p> <p>Use of the visual identity to Influence the audience's perception of ERERA.</p>	<p>ERERA Communication Staff.</p>	<p>Defining ERERA's audience.</p> <p>Research communication policies used by other ECOWAS agencies and institutions.</p> <p>Research social media trends and Develop a corporate social media communications plan</p> <p>Implement a strategy that includes Education opportunities for creating consistency in branding and the use of communication materials.</p>	<p>Number of media hits and events.</p>	<p>Communications Officer</p> <p>ERERA Management</p>	<p>2 Years</p>
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5. MONITORING & EVALUATION

5.1. Coordination

For this strategy to be implemented effectively, ERERA shall enhance cooperation with its key stakeholders whose operations are linked with regulatory functions.

5.2. Monitoring

ERERA's Communications Unit shall monitor the implementation of this Strategy. The monitoring shall be done through both mainstream and social media reviews.

Through monitoring, the Office shall be able to establish the public perception about ERERA and prepare prompt responses where necessary. The monitoring of media also assists ERERA to analyse to what extent media establishments are aware of its functions. The media to be covered includes the following: -

5.2.1. Newspapers

When monitoring newspapers, it is always important to analyse editorial pages, opinion columns; and Letters to the Editor because all these are possible means of publicity, both negative and positive.

5.2.2. Radio and Television

Radio and TV bulletins; and live or recorded talk shows are publicity outlets. ERERA should use these avenues to gain feedback on public perception about ERERA.

5.2.3. Social Media

ERERA *Website, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, blogs*, and other social media are prominent platforms preferred mostly by the youths to express their views on various subjects. ERERA shall continue to monitor the trend of social media coverage on issues related to the Authority.

5.2.4. Press Conferences

Press conferences are quite common in today's world. They offer an opportunity for journalists and the public to meet with one or more officials of an organization in a question-and-answer session. Apart from being the platform for monitoring, press conferences can also be a favourite instrument for media relations as they offer the organization a direct opportunity to communicate with the public.

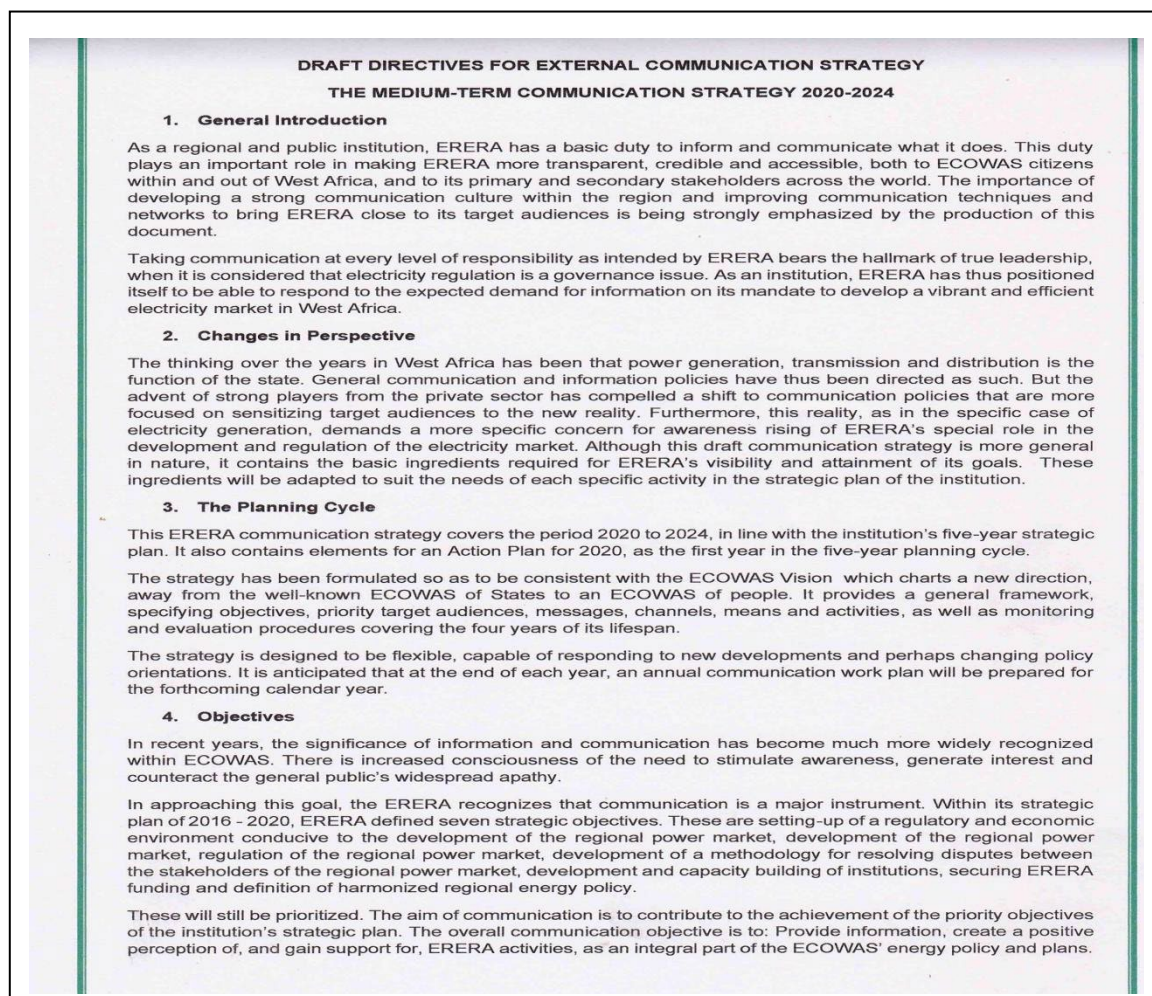
5.3. Evaluation

This Communication Strategy provides means to ascertain whether each communication objective has been attained. The objectives contained in this strategy include:

S/N	Focus Area	Strategic Goal
1	Optimizing ERERA regulatory functions and responsibilities.	Raise Public Awareness level on Benefit, Risks and Safety of Integrated Cross-Border Electricity Market to 80 per cent by June 2024.
2	Optimizing ERERA communication capacity to deliver its mandate and functions.	Build ERERA's communication culture and staff capacity to create enabling policymaking and business environment to 70 per cent by June 2023.
3	Optimizing ERERA's stakeholder engagement and advocacy Mandates and Functions.	Deliver exceptional customer service through public/stakeholders' engagement and operation of an information centre by June 2024.
4	Optimizing ERERA Mandate and Functions.	Generate and sustain stakeholders' interest in the functioning and development of the regional electricity market by June 2023
5	Optimizing ERERA Mandate and Functions.	Secure donor and investor confidence in profitability in the development of the regional electricity market by June 2023

6. APPENDIXES

6.1. Appendix 1: DRAFT DIRECTIVES FOR EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGY



Source: ERERA, 2016.

Although these objectives are specific to communication, they are still broad in scope, and will need to be broken down into more detailed objectives, associated with particular target audiences, partners and stakeholders, when the annual action plans are elaborated. This will assist, both in the definition of individual activities and in the development of indicators, quantitative and qualitative, for monitoring and evaluation purposes. At this stage, a logical framework approach will be employed.

5. Stakeholders and Audiences

The number of stakeholders and potential target audiences for communication activities related to electricity market development regulatory issues is large, and they exercise a variety of functions. As a broad categorization, they may be divided into the following groups (which are not listed in any special priority order):

- Multipliers – (those community agents and opinion leaders who evaluate, interpret, validate and re-transmit information)
- Partners (those agencies and institutions whose collaboration is needed)
- Decision Makers
- Gatekeepers (in particular the media, which filters and interprets information)
- Selected Groups among the citizenry.

6. Priority Audiences and Target Groups

All of these categories are important to ERERA in one way or another. At the same time, it is recognized that communication activities have to be concentrated on *priority audiences and target groups*. (The term 'target audience' is employed for simplicity and convenience). The need to prioritize is due to a variety of factors and constraints, including the limits placed on human and financial resources, the comparative accessibility (or inaccessibility) of certain groups and the relative availability of suitable channels. For this reason, over the four years of this medium-term strategy, a selection of priority groups from the broader list will be targeted, each catered for with a specific mix of communication channels, means and activities.

Within the main categories described above, therefore, the audiences and target groups to be prioritized will be as follows:

6.1 Multipliers

Civil society (in particular NGO communication platforms, professional organizations, consumer advocacy groups, opinion leaders (e.g. activists and public affairs analysts, development workers, economists, academics, civil servants, community and religious leaders).

6.2 Development Partners

All donor organizations cooperating with ECOWAS institutions (e.g. Regional Economic Commissions (RECs), UN agencies, World Bank, EU, AfDB, USAID, AFD, GIZ, etc).

6.3 Decision Makers

Parliamentarians (national and ECOWAS), ECOWAS Commission, WAPP, ECREE, WAGPA, ECOWAS Court of Justice, ECOWAS Member States (Governments, ministries of energy and mines, national energy development agencies), national regulators-operators-utilities, Consultative Committees of Regulators, Operators and Consumers, etc

6.4 Gatekeepers

Journalists, (in particular energy correspondents and energy-focused media organizations, media networks and outlets in Member States, media networks and outlets in RECs, press agencies and professional organizations such as editors' forums).

PARIS 21
MESSAGE DEVELOPMENT WORKSHEET

HEADLINE

Key Message

Key Message

Key Message

Supporting Facts

Supporting Facts

Supporting Facts

Illustration

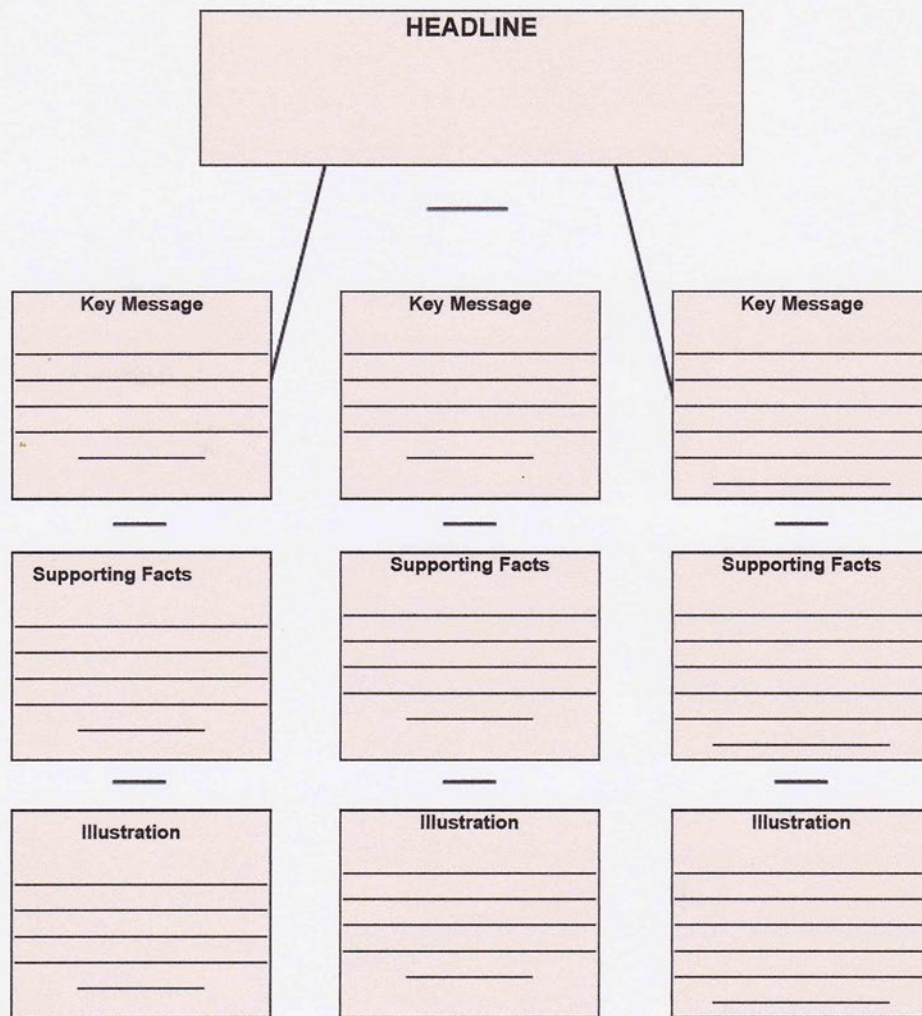
Illustration

Illustration

SOURCE: Message Development Worksheet , Paris 21



MESSAGE DEVELOPMENT WORKSHEET



6.2. Appendix 2: Publicity Essentials

Experts suggest the following guidelines that EREERA can apply for using the media for publicity purposes:

- Staff and EREERA's established contacts should be canvassed for names of media contacts particularly in the key West African Media Hubs (Dakar, Lagos, Abuja Abidjan, and Accra).
- It is highly recommended to always fit media outlets with the targeted audiences and the messages to be communicated.
- In no way should a reporter be misled knowingly. Virtuous reporters can detect misinformation or an outright lie right away. If discovered, the credibility of the organisation is put in jeopardy.
- Make sure the story is newsworthy. Editors and reporters are busy people and are always working to tight deadlines; they do not have time to sort through unimportant or trivial information.
- If the organisation does not know the answer to a question, this should be acknowledged. The organisation can always find the answer and call back; If there is a reason why the organisation cannot answer a question, this should be admitted. A good reporter will respect this honesty.
- Never use pressure to get publicity or favourable coverage, it has a way of backfiring.
- Keep news releases as short as possible.
- Check and double-check all information distributed to the media. Accuracy is essential.
- Use the phone to maximize the benefits of the organisation's publicity. A telephone call can confirm whether a press release sent was seen or any other important feedback.
- Stay off editors' backs. If your story has merit, it will run; if it does not, it will not. Keep promises - all of them - or they should not be made.
- Send news releases and media advisories to a specific person or title. An advance release should arrive at least two days before the event it publicizes.
- Do not call top editors, publishers, and broadcasters with anything less than a big story. Always have a contact person in media houses.
- Where more than one editor at the same media outlet is contacted on the same story, inform the media house. List somewhere names of all the editors receiving that release.
- Establish the organisation's credibility as a valued and reliable source of information.
- Tailor press materials to fit the medium. Make efforts to know media deadlines and the ground rules for submitting information.
- Let one person be the media contact for the organization.
- Do not organize a news conference unless there is something of importance to inform the intended stakeholders.

6.3. Appendix 3: Issues Management

Also known as, Crisis Communication, Issues Management refers to the appropriate way of handling the media during a crisis or negative publicity. Preparations can help the organisation minimize the negative effects and even turn around a negative story.

According to Andy Gilman of [Comm-Core Consulting Group](#) “The secret of crisis management is not good vs. bad; it’s preventing the bad from getting worse.”

The best course of action in a crisis is to be forthcoming and honest and be ready to facilitate the flow of information for the media. Here are some basic Dos and Don’ts to follow when responding to reporter questions during a crisis or controversy.

What to Do

There may be varied ways to manage a crisis, but most experts agree on the following:

- Gather all the facts about an issue.
- Appoint a single spokesperson to handle all reporters calls.
- Respond quickly, dealing only with the facts and providing as much detail as possible to prevent suspicion and rumours.
- Avoid descriptive adjectives or exaggerations.
- Stick to core messages all the time.
- For radio and television, think about speaking in quotable sound bites - the broadcast equivalent of a direct quote in a newspaper or magazine. Include the most important information at the beginning of a sentence to increase the likelihood of that information making the final editing cut.
- Try to tell the whole story at once, rather than allowing the media to uncover more damaging information. Several small negative stories are worse than one big negative one.
- Be accessible to the media so they won’t go to other sources for news.
- Report the organisation’s bad news. If media have to dig it out, the organization will appear guilty until proven innocent and will have lost control of the story.
- Provide sufficient evidence of statements, enlisting credible third-party sources when possible and appropriate.
- Inquire whether the reporter has interviewed other sources. Suggest other resources the reporter might contact.
- Try to contain the crisis to a limited geographic area, keeping the “media story” a local one when possible and appropriate.
- Maintain good and mutually beneficial relationships with key media under normal circumstances to increase chances of fair and accurate coverage during a crisis.

What to Avoid

- Avoid saying “no comment.” If ERERA can’t discuss something, explain why. If the information is not available, reply that it will be sourced and supplied as soon as possible.
- Avoid blaming anyone. First, address the problem at hand and express concern for everyone involved; When the facts are available on the cause of a crisis, then release them.
- Avoid speculations or giving personal observations on anything; release only confirmed facts.

- Do not make “off the record” comments. During a crisis, there is no such thing. Tell reporters that, as a matter of policy, respond to questions regarding rumours or speculations.
- Do not repeat negative or inflammatory words. Otherwise, it might end up being attributed to the organisation.
- Do not use business jargon that is understood only by people within the industry and no one else. Do not select reporters, return all phone calls.

6.4. Appendix 4: Information Materials

Publicity materials include media, brochures or leaflets, newsletters, annual reports, and videos or CDs. However, given the availability of advanced technology most information can be prepared and disseminated electronically. One of the most common tools that organizations use for effective PR is the Media Kit. A Media Kit is a package containing the profile of the organization, news information for reporters and editors about an event or issue.

Below is a media kit that ERERA can use as a PR tool:

6.4.1. Brochures

Experts define a brochure as a descriptive piece of folded paper that outlines an organization’s vision, mission, activities, and programs. The brochure must have a good layout; must be written carefully, creatively as well as accurately.

Below is a checklist to guide the development of a brochure:

- What is the key message that you want ERERA to communicate?
- Who constitute the key ERERA audiences?
- What kind of response does ERERA expect from its audiences? (i.e., what does ERERA want its publics to think or do after reading its brochure?)
- How should the brochure be written, designed, and printed to elicit the response ERERA want? Does the brochure need pictures, graphs, drawings, or other forms of visuals?
- Is the brochure written in a clear, error-free, and language that can be understood by your target audiences?

After the first brochure has been in circulation for a while it is important to make sure that each subsequent piece continues to reflect the main philosophy as well as the tone of the first. For consistency of ERERA’s Visual Image and Identity, all thematic, as well as design elements in the brochure, must reflect similar formats, colours, and compatible typefaces and layouts.

6.4.2. Press Releases

A Press Release is newsworthy information packaged by an organization and dispatched to media houses for publication. Many Press Releases are spiked or relegated to the trash bins because they are not packaged in a way that is attractive enough to warrant the news editor’s attention. A press release can contain any of the following:

- A statement on a pertinent issue about the organization
- A report on activities or events within the organization
- An announcement on forthcoming events or activities [™] Reactions to statements, press reports, opinions, or views by others

Press releases are a relatively easy, cheap but largely effective way of making the public aware of what an organization is doing or what it stands is on certain issues of public interest. Well written press releases offer free publicity to an organization about information that could otherwise be paid for as an advert.

For press releases to be effective they have to be written as follows:

- Summarize the message that an organization wants to communicate. The summary must include the most important – or eye-catching - aspects of the message (i.e., the What, Who, When, Where Why and How)
- It must be written and must consider the news format (Inverted pyramid). It must have an official logo, colours, and name of the organization
- It must have a proper address and date of publication. It must have a headline, stating the subject matter

6.4.3. Feature articles

A feature story is a detailed article about any subject that has reader appeal. It has a beginning, middle and an end. It is expected that since features are normally longer than news stories, their beginning must elicit interest in the reader and convince them to read the entire piece if possible. Its middle may inform, educate, persuade, explore, or simply entertain while its end tends to be powerful, memorable, provoking thinking, action, or simply reflection. A feature article puts together important information, intriguing quotes and adding a human-interest element to it to increase reader appeal.

6.4.4. Media Advisory

This refers to briefly packaged information normally sent to the editor as a reminder of an upcoming event or press conference. A media advisory is normally shorter than a press release, in most cases about half a page. The media advisory is supposed to remind the editor of the 5 Ws and H of an event, e.g., What, When,

Note on Publication

- Mention the exact date – or dates before which - you wish to have the press release published.
- Do not forget to mention the authoritative source to be quoted by having them sign the press release.
- Make sure the press release reaches the News editor of a news organization.
- Where, Who, Why and How (would be available for interviews), significance and Photo Opportunities. A contact name and number should appear in the upper right-hand corner of the advisory.

6.4.5. Photography

As the old cliché has it, “a picture speaks a thousand words.” As such Photos are a powerful publicity tool that ERERA can use to promote its image. The PR office must keep photographs (as well as video) collections from past events.

If the organization does not have a skilled photographer, it may wish to hire a professional, preferably from any local newspaper. ERERA must remember to give credit to a photographer by attaching his/her name to any photo ERERA submits to the media.

Photo Captions: Any photo used in a newspaper remains incomplete if it does not bear a correct caption. Normally good captions add significance to the photo rather than stating the obvious. The caption is supposed to explain the picture to the reader in the fewest words possible. The writer must make sure the caption “answers” the 5Ws, who, what, when, why, how and where using correct spellings of names and places.

6.4.6. Cover Letter

It is important to remember that whenever ERERA sends a press release, feature article or photo to a newsroom, there is no guarantee that editors will be interested in them. A cover letter increases the chances of getting the editor’s attention. Since editors encounter

many such letters during the day, the cover letter has to be short and interesting to warrant attention. Contact information must be provided in case the editor needs clarification or further interviews with the ERETA spokesperson.