



Assessing VCDP's Performance on Innovation, Knowledge Management and Communications Strategies (and Systems)

CONSULTANT'S DRAFT REPORT

Submitted by

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Value Chain Development Programme (VCDP) is an offshoot of the Nigeria 2010-2015 IFAD Country Strategic Opportunities Programme (COSOP) which advanced the recommendations of the 2008/2009 IFAD Country Programme Evaluation (CPE) that was jointly carried out by the FGN and IFAD. The CPE Report recommended that future IFAD agricultural interventions in Nigeria were to aim at strengthening farm productivity and access to market. VCDP was designed to further that objective, and build on the good initiatives by the FGN, other donor-funded interventions, and the private sector in the country.

The Project was designed in alignment with the policy frameworks at the time, namely, the National Agricultural and Food Security Strategy (NAFSS), the National Policy on Integrated Rural Development (NPIRD), the Rural Development Sector Strategy (RDSS), the National Agricultural Investment Plan (NAIP) and the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA). Consequently, the Project objectives focused on (i) agricultural productivity enhancement; (ii) support to commercial agriculture; (iii) land management and control; (iv) linkages and support to inputs and products markets; and (v) programme coordination, monitoring and evaluation.

1.1. Assessing KMC Performance as part of the Mid-Term Evaluation

In line with the project template, a Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) was required for VCDP. Typically, MTE involve assessing various key functions (both technical and administrative) within the Project to provide lessons for managing the rest of the Project Term. Based on this background, VCDP appointed Development Input Ltd through a competitive bid, as Consultant to assess the performance of the Knowledge Management and Communications (KMC) functions at the NPMU and across the SPMUs. The KMC unit is part of Programme Management Component of the Project. Therefore, this report is one of the MTE Reports.

1.2. VCDP's Knowledge Management and Communications (KMC) Objectives

The objectives of the Project's KMC strategies are: (i) promote knowledge sharing between all stakeholders at national, regional, state and community levels to enhance learning, sustainability and replication of programme innovations and best practices; (ii) document, produce and disseminate knowledge products on programme impact, approaches and lessons to influence scaling-up of programme interventions; (iii) promote improved coordination and cooperation with a supportive knowledge-sharing and learning infrastructure; (iv) foster partnerships for broader knowledge-sharing and learning; and (v) increase the visibility of VCDP and its achievements in rice and cassava agricultural value chain development in Nigeria.

The above-listed objectives are consistent with KMC objectives in any organization; broadly, these are (i) to ensure a symmetrical access to information and knowledge resources within the organization, thereby improving the overall cohesion among the different functions within the organization; and (ii) to keep the relevant external partners and publics well-informed about the work of the organization. The first objective is targeted at the organization's internal audience, and implies that a good KM involves applying a user-friendly Management



Information System (MIS) as an integral part of an organization's overall management function. The second objective is targeted at the organization's various external audiences, and implies the cultivation and utilization of appropriate communications strategies, processes, tools/channels/mechanisms/media, technologies, and target audiences to meet the interests and priorities of such audiences.

For VCDP, the internal audiences for KMC are the Project personnel (NPMU and SPMU), and the direct participants. The external audiences include the donors (IFAD, FGN and State Governments), the responsible ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs), policymakers, the relevant private economic sectors, civil society organizations, other development donors, the mass media, relevant banks, and various other cross-cutting service providers.

1.3. Terms of Reference

The KMC Assessment was commissioned by VCDP in June 2017, guided by a number of Terms of Reference. The Consultant was, among other tasks, to perform the following assignments:

- i. Determine, quantitatively, the level of documentation that has taken place since the commencement of implementation of the VCDP, and if, how and the extent to which such documentation has helped the project's visibility at local, state and national levels;
- ii. Assess the efficacy of the VCDP knowledge Management Strategy in facilitating the implementation of communication and knowledge sharing activities, and standardizing the project's knowledge products across the target states;
- iii. Identify and recommend any effective pathways for VCDP to capture, capitalize and share the project's knowledge results among all levels of the stakeholders, and with the general public;
- iv. Identify and suggest coherent plan opportunities for knowledge exchange through study tours by the project's personnel, or through other forms of knowledge sharing;
- v. Recommend any other relevant Knowledge Management infrastructure that could enhance the capacity to generate, screen, review, store and release knowledge products to intended audiences.

To perform the above-listed tasks, the Consultant's scope of work and activities, under the supervision of the VCDP's National Programme Coordinator, included:

- Documentation of all knowledge products so far developed by the project, and examining their relevance and dissemination to stakeholders;
- Reviewing of the project's existing list of stakeholders, and the extent to which the communications needs such stakeholders have been met so far;
- Assessment of the level of standardization of knowledge products across all levels: community, State and National;
- Examining the role(s) of the VCDP knowledge Management Strategy in generally enhancing communications and knowledge sharing both within and outside the project;



- Compiling an inventory the project's success stories by location, to inspire possible replication or up-scaling;
- Reviewing the project's website (<http://vcdpnigeria.org>) by testing it for user-friendliness, usefulness (functionality) and aesthetics (look and feel); and
- Documenting lessons learned so far on VCDP's communications, knowledge management and innovations across the project that can benefit the implementation of the remaining lifespan of the project.

1.4. Methodology

A standard procedure for a performance assessment involves identifying the activities and targets planned, the efforts made in achieving each target, the outcomes of such effort, and the lessons learned on what can be done to improving the performance. This procedure was followed in assessing the performance of VCDP's Knowledge Management and Communications (KMC) functions. The assignment was implemented in four phases, namely: (i) briefing of the Consultant by VCDP; (ii) preparation of an inception report by the Consultant; (iii) visit to each SPMU by the Consultant for data collections; and (iv) data analysis and report writing. Any of these activities was repeated where necessary.

As part of the briefing by VCDP, the Consultant had several meetings with the KMC Advisor at the NPMU, during which copies of the Project's KMC Strategy and the Media Engagement Strategy were made available to the Consultant. The KMC Advisor also provided oral information to fill any gaps in response to the Consultant's questions after studying these documents. Furthermore, the Consultant attended a meeting of all the KMC Officers chaired by the KMC Advisor in Abuja, during which the Consultant was introduced to the KMCOs and they were briefed on the ToR and timeframe for the KMC performance assessment. At this meeting, the Consultant and KMCOs agreed on the dates for the Consultant's field visit to the respective states. The Consultant was also briefed by the National Project Coordinator (NPC).

Based on the information acquired from the consultation phase, an inception report was prepared and submitted by the Consultant, and approved by VCDP, after which a disbursement of 30% of the consultation fee was received to enable the implementation of field visits. During this phase, some adjustments on the timing of the field visits became necessary as the IFAD-FGN half-yearly Supervision Mission was in progress. Eventually all the target states were visited, and data were collected from all SPMUs through (i) interview with the SPC; (ii) interview with the KMCO; (iii) Focus Group Discussion with SPMU staff members; (iv) collection of secondary data in the SPMU and other sources outside VCDP, e.g. internet and old newspapers.

The data were analysed and the report prepared. During this phase, further clarification was sought and obtained from any SPMU where necessary, while other facts were triangulated by either seeking further clarification from the Project's KMC Advisor or the National Project Coordinator (NPC).



1.5. Summary of VCDP's Communications Strategy

The Project's KMC Strategy and Media Engagement Strategy identified the target audience categories, the messages to be disseminated, the dissemination tools/channels, the collaborating partners, the timeframe, and the VCDP offices responsible (whether NPMU or SPMU). Taken together, these formed the KMC performance targets in the project plan. The overarching objective of KMC functions is to contribute toward achieving the Project's goals.

VCDP has a unified KM Strategy (i.e. a single strategy to be implemented by both the NPMU and each SPMU). The Strategy comprises 3 key components, namely, (i) Exchange; (ii) Repositories; and (iii) Protocols. The Exchange involves message-dissemination activities such as public outreach events, stakeholder engagement, and community mobilization activities that enable VCDP partners to generate, acquire, and share both tacit and codified knowledge on given themes. Repositories of knowledge are physical or virtual vessels (e.g. publications, websites, reports, databases, or the skills and institutional memories of project personnel or partners) which are used for the storage and retrieval of knowledge products.

Protocols refer to a set of agreed procedures, processes, expected roles and responsibilities of parties involved in a relationship that produces and shares knowledge to intended audiences, utilizing the repositories and infrastructure developed. In other words, the ergonomics of KM concerns effective combination and utilization of people, technology, time, and procedures to achieve the desired knowledge sharing objectives among a target population.

Since the NPMU had a unified KMC strategy for VCDP, the respective SPMUs utilized a uniform, centralized strategy, rather than each SPMU developing its own. In other words, the unified KMC strategy enabled the standardization of KMC products across the target states. However, as pointed out in the Recommendations, standardization should be balanced with the need to be locally effective and relevant.

Under the unified strategy, the target audience categories were identified as

- (i) Community-level, which included farmer groups, various other agricultural occupational groups e.g. input dealers, women/youth groups, community leaders, cassava and rice value chain innovation platforms, and interested community-based organizations (CBOs);
- (ii) Local Government level, including the elected and career personnel responsible for agriculture-related policies and programmes at the LGA level;
- (iii) State level, with specific focus on the State Ministry of Agriculture (SMoA) in each of the 6 target states, and each State Agricultural Development Programme (ADP);
- (iv) Federal level, which included the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD), the National Agricultural Seeds Council (NASC), and other agriculture-related ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) nationwide;
- (v) The Agriculture-related Research, Education and Extension System (AREES) comprising the various national agricultural research institutes (NARIs), the universities of agriculture, the faculties of agriculture at the general universities, the Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria (ARCN); and the various knowledge-based organizations operating in Nigeria;



- (vi) The programme funders, namely, the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN); and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD);
- (vii) The Private Sector, comprising all interested for-profit economic actors/partners and activities in the cassava and rice commodity subsectors;
- (viii) International development assistance entities and programmes operating in Nigeria;
- (ix) Mass Media, including all print and electronic media across the country; and
- (x) The general public

The KMC Strategy document identified respective message themes, the dissemination tools and channels, and the relevant partners to be involved in reaching each of the above-listed target audience categories. Each of the six SPMUs followed this template in implementing its KMC functions within its target jurisdiction.

2. KEY FINDINGS

The Consultant evaluated the extent to which the KMC functions achieved both the internal and external objectives of VCDP, both at the national level and in each target state. In terms of achieving visibility in the national mass media, the indicators reviewed by the Consultant included the number of news stories published in national newspapers, the number of news reports broadcast on radio and television stations that have nationwide reach, and the number of technical publications featuring the VCDP. For example, a Google search yielded various media reports and news stories on VCDP activities. The reports are evidence of the achievement of KMC objectives, but they also form part of the repository of knowledge products of Programme. Eleven of such products are sampled in Table I.

The key general findings on KMC performance in VCDP include the following:

1. At the inception of the Project, within the administrative structure of the State Project Management Unit (SPMU), knowledge management and communications functions were subordinated to the monitoring and evaluation functions. The assistant M&E officer was responsible for carrying out KMC activities under the supervision of the M&E officer. An IFAD support mission recommended that KMC functions be independent of M&E functions to enhance greater efficiency and effectiveness. Since then, the respective M&E assistants transitioned into KMC assistants, and subsequently became KMC officers. Because of this history, some KMC officers are still sharing office space with M&E officers, and are not yet established in their positions as substantive officers.
2. Furthermore, the KMC units across the target states seemed under-resourced, and the units are still evolving into their envisaged independent and strategic roles within the Project. For this reason the KMC units are yet to participate actively in budget preparation and budget management within the SPMUs.
3. The Project used a unified Knowledge Management and Communications Strategy across the six target states and the head office (NPMU). Because of this approach, there was consistency in the tools and channels used for message dissemination by the Project. This also helped to project a consistent corporate brand for the Project and its operating themes, principles and activities across the target states. The media engagement strategy



of syndicating the activity reports through the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) was effective in producing the consistency.

4. Based on the information collected and the responses to interviews and FGD questions, it is evident that the SPCs and KMCOs have the same understanding of the roles and functions of the KMC unit in the Project as the NPC and the KMC Advisor. In other words, the NPC, KMC Advisor, SPCs, KMCOs, and other VCDP staff members, all have a similar understanding of the roles and functions of the KMC unit. They see these roles and functions as addressing internal management objectives (i.e. an effective MIS to enhance project management) and external communication objectives (i.e. message dissemination, corporate branding, policy advocacy, and interactive channels with project partners). To this extent, the KMC unit at the NPMU and in all SPMUs has demonstrated success in performing its functions. This was evident in the understanding of the KMC roles shown by the respective SPCs as well as the NPC.
5. In some states it was observed that KMC unit had no adequate office accommodation. It was also observed that there was no appropriate equipment for the performance of professional quality KMC functions. This is explained further under the section on 'Desired Improvements'. It was also observed that in some states, the KMCO performed all the different tasks alone, (e.g. photography and secretarial duties), without a division of labour which could enhance the quality of services delivered.
6. VCDP-assisted value chain Innovation Platforms (IPs) for cassava and rice were not listed among the channels for message dissemination, nor as collaborating partners. While many of the partners identified by VCDP on the KMC Strategy are constituent members of the IPs, it is important to explicitly name the IPs in the strategy documents and KMC reports, to evidence the potential for sustainability of the VCDP-assisted structures after the end of the Project.
7. Each SPMU had generated several knowledge products such as programme reports, pamphlets, video documentaries, posters, fact sheets, newspaper advertorials, newsletters, and radio and television programmes focusing on various message themes.
8. VCDP's internet-based channels for communicating with partners and the general public include (i) the project's website - <http://vcdpnigeria.org>; (ii) Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/vcdpnigeria/>; (iii) Twitter @vcdpnigeria; and (iv) Google+ <https://plus.google.com/u/0/112126977402796277932>.
9. While some of the information about the Project can be accessed through the above listed internet-based channels, there are also internet-based KMC products which are accessible via Google and other internet search engines. Such documents include various newspaper reports on the Project, VCDP's own documents, IFAD documents concerning the Project, and state and federal government documents on the project.

2.1. Evidence of Project's Mass Media Visibility

To assess the extent to which the KMC functions achieved the objective of nationwide visibility for the Project, the Consultant collected evidence of print media publications, technical monographs, field video tapes/CDs, field audio tapes, radio and television programmes aired, and online publications about the Project. This generated many pieces of evidence across these media platforms. Samples of hard-copy publications are enclosed as Volumes I & II of this Report. Find below (Tables 1) samples of internet-based products and (Table 2) print media products which serve as evidence of the Project's visibility.

**Table 1: List of Some Internet-based Evidence of the Project's Visibility**

S/NO	Topic & type of product	Date	Name and medium of publication	Publisher's web link or reference
1.	IFAD-VCDP Spends N96.9m on Cassava, Rice Processing Facilities in Niger	18 July 2017	Farmers Market online	http://farmersmarketng.com/2017/07/18/ifad-vcdp-spends-n96-9m-cassava-rice-processing-facilities-niger/
2.	VCDP Lauds Taraba Government on Payment of Counterpart Funding of N70m	10 July 2017	Vanguard Newspaper	http://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/07/vcdp-coordinator-lauds-ishaku-over-counterpart-fund-payment/
3.	VCDP begins inputs distribution to rice, cassava farmers in Anambra	9 July, 2017	The Guardian Newspaper	https://guardian.ng/features/agro-care/vcdp-begins-inputs-distribution-to-rice-cassava-farmers-in-anambra/
4.	AATF & IFAD-VCDP Partner on Cassava Mechanization (News Report)	13 June 2017	Tribune Newspaper, internet-based	https://nnn.com.ng/nigerianews/tribune/aatf-ifad-vcdp-partner-on-cassava-mechanisation/
5.	VCDP online e-tenders for procurement activities	25 Nov., 2016	ETENDERS, internet-based	http://www.etenders.com.ng/fgnifad-value-chain-development-programme-invitation-tender/
6.	Anambra State surpasses rice production targets	26 Oct., 2016	Information Nigeria, internet-based	https://www.informationng.com/tag/vcdp
7.	FG/IFAD programme distributes agric inputs to 5,000 farmers in Niger	26 July, 2016	Agro Business Times, internet-based	http://www.agrobusinessngr.com/fgifad-programme-distributes-agric-inputs-to-5000-farmers-in-niger/
8.	9.2 million Nigerian farmers benefit from VCDP assistance	23 June 2016	Vanguard Newspaper	http://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/06/9-2-million-rural-poor-nigerians-benefiting-ifad-financed-programmes-project-coordinator/
9.	Achievements of VCDP in Nigeria	16 June, 2016	Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development website	http://fmard.gov.ng/summary-of-achievements-by-ifad-assisted-value-chain-development-committee-january-2015-to-may-2016/
10.	Niger State Government Lauds VCDP project in the state	16 Nov., 2015	Agro Nigeria, internet-based	https://agronigeria.com.ng/niger-govt-lauds-ifadvcdp-projects-2/
11.	VCDP 1 st IFAD Mission Report (PDF)	15 June, 2015	IFAD Project Joint Supervision Report	https://operations.ifad.org/documents/654016/322ceca4-1e80-425b-b3db-1cac7144fa89



Table 2: Samples of Project's Visibility in Print Media



2.2. Summaries of Data Collected on Implemented KMC Activities

The interviews and FGDs generated information on various aspects of KMC plans, including the intended target audience, the KMC infrastructure already in use, message dissemination tools/channels, the message themes, and the partners involved. Summaries of their responses are shown on Table 3.



Table 3A: Summary of data collected

Office responsible	Target audience categories	Message themes	KM Infrastructure	Channels or Tools	Partners involved
Anambra SPMU	Community level, agricultural occupational groups, cassava and rice value chain innovation platforms, Local Government Departments of Agriculture, focal points States Ministry of Agriculture, States Agricultural	(1) Pre-season training on rice and cassava value chain best agronomic practices integrity compliance. (2) Mobilization of rural household toward generating productivity and export sensitization of SPMU on KMC strategy.	(1) SONY made in Japan DCR – SD1000E, Digital Video Camera MPEG2 SD Recording Capability; (2) 2No. CANON (Model IXUS 160) Digital Camera; (3) Public Address System (Model No. 6784) Japanese.	(1) News Media; (2) Workshops. (3) Newspapers. (4) Farmers’ Field Days. (5) Television.	(1)Ministry of Agriculture; (2) ADP; (3) Civil Society Organizations; (4) NDIOLU Micro Finance Bank; (5) Rural Life; (6) International Institute For Tropical Agriculture (IITA); (7) HarvestPlus; (8) Nigeria Root Crop Research Institute (NRCRI); (9) Nigeria Agricultural Insurance Corporation (NAIC); (10) International Fertilizer Development Centre (IFDC); (11) Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN); (12) Cellulant;(13) RUFIN; (14) EFOS (Tractor Company); (15) FADAMA; (16) National Agricultural Seed Council (NASC); (17) NIRSAL; (18) NCAM.
Benue SPMU	Development Programmes,	(1) Success stories; (2) fact sheets; (3) sensitization, innovation; (4) knowledge sharing; (5) press releases; (6) special feature; (7) gender mainstreaming; (8) production; (9) processing; (10) marketing infrastructure; and (11) construction.	(1) Facebook page; (2) Twitter; (3) WhatsApp group platform; (4) Blog; (5) Mailing group; (6) internet hotspot for communication; (7) website, etc	(1)Progress reports; (2) workshops; (3) fact sheets; (4) success stories; (5) group discussions; (6) booklets; (7) posters; and (8) strategy briefs/ documents	Media, value chain steering committee, Research Institutes, youth and women groups, farmer’s groups, Apex associations, LGA Chairman, departments and Local NGOs, Ministry of Agriculture, Finance as well as banks, off-takers, Bank of Agriculture, service providers, etc.



Table 3B: Summary of data collected

Office responsible	Target audience categories	Message themes	KM Infrastructure	Channels or Tools	Partners involved
Ebonyi SPMU	Community level, agricultural occupational groups, cassava and rice value chain innovation platforms, Local Government Departments of Agriculture, focal points States Ministry of Agriculture, States Agricultural Development Programmes,	(1) Good agronomic practices; (2) Innovations; (3) General awareness on programmes intervention and activities	(1) Radio; (2) Television; (3) Newspapers; (4) Flyers; (5) Telephone call	(1) Television; (2) Radio; (3) Flyers; (4) Brochures; (5) Telephone Communication; and (6) direct communication	(1) Input service providers; (2) Contractors; (3) International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA); (4) Nigeria Root Crop Research Institute (NRCRI); (5) Rural Life; (6) Ebonyi rice world; (7) Cellulant; (8) Rems Konsults; and (9) IFAD
Niger SPMU	Government Departments of Agriculture, focal points States Ministry of Agriculture, States Agricultural Development Programmes,	(1) FOs sensitization pamphlet; (2) Step-by-Step guide to false-bottom rice parboiling technology; (3) Photo stories publication on VCDP achievements; (4) Video documentary of success stories; (5) Documentary on VCDP impact assessment; (6) Tangibles of VCDP achievements; (7) Bird scaring equipment; (8) Climate smart weather reader; and (9) Radio commentaries.	(1) Video documentary; (2) posters; (3) postcards; (4) radio commentaries; (5) banners; (6) pamphlets; (7) brochure/manuals; (8) publications; (9) progress reports	(1) TV channels :- (i) NTA; (ii) AIT; (2) Radio :- (i) Power FM Bida; (ii) Radio Niger; (iii) Prestige Radio; (3) Print media ; (i) newspapers; (ii) magazines; (4) Social media (i) You tube; (ii) WhatsApp; (iii) Facebook; (iv) Website blogs; (5) Stakeholders forum :- (i) Workshops/ Trainings; and (ii) Sensitization	(1) NAFDAC; (2) SON; (3) NAIC; (4) GIZ; (4) ONYX Rice Mill; (5) IAR&T; (6) HARVEST PLUS Ibadan; (7) CBN Anchor Borrowers Scheme; (8) Federal University of Technology, Minna; (9) National Cereal Research Institute; (10) Upper Niger River Basin Authority; (11) HELLO Tractor; (12) Syngenta; (13) Tractor Owners and Hiring Association of Nigeria (TOHFAN); (14) CAISL; (15) NIRSAL; (16) UNICANE Industrial Limited; (17) ZAWORO Tractor Hiring; (18) NAMDA (ADP)



Table 3C: Summary of data collected

Office responsible	Target audience categories	Message themes	KM Infrastructure	Channels or Tools	Partners involved
Ogun SPMU	Community level, agricultural occupational groups, cassava and rice value chain innovation platforms, Local Government Departments of	(1) Agricultural Market Information System step down; (2) 1 st quarter monitoring of VCDP facilities; (3) 2017 Pre-Season training; (4) 2017 Input Distribution for VCDP farmers; (5) Integrity compliance among VCDP Stakeholders; (6) Producer/ Off-takers meeting; (7) Step down training on 2017 Pre-Season training; (8) GAP training on Cassava and Rice; (9) Coverage of 5 th Supervision Mission	(1) Provision of a Panasonic Video Camera; (2) Provision of a professional still camera; (3) Provision of a universal tripod stand; (4) Provision of a Sony portable midget	(1) News Agency of Nigeria (NAN); (2) Ogun State Television (OGTV); (3) Nigeria Television Authority (NTA); (4) Channels TV; (5) Newage; (6) Paramount FM; (7) Rockcity FM; (8) VCDP Bulletin.	(1) Ogun State Ministry of Agriculture; (2) Federal Ministry of Agriculture; (3) International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA); (4) State Ministry of Budget and Physical Planning; (5) Ogun State Ministry of Finance; (6) Ogun State Agricultural Development Programme.
Taraba SPMU	Agriculture, focal points States Ministry of Agriculture, States Agricultural Development Programmes,	(1) Dry season farmers in Taraba seek govt's assistance to access water; (2) IFAD supports 2, 242 rice, cassava farmers in Taraba with inputs; (3) IFAD empowers over 2,000 cassava, rice farmers in Taraba; (4) Taraba has best conditions for rice, cassava, cultivation – IFAD; (5) VCDP coordinator lauds Ishaku over counterpart fund payment; (6) IFAD empowers 2,242 farmers in Taraba; (7) We're impressed with what we saw in Taraba – VCDP	So far we've not developed any of such infrastructures like handbills, posters, newsletters, documentaries, the use of web base information channels but spanners are at work to build many of these infrastructures in the very near future.	(1) Interviews with print news; (2) channels; (3) audio or videotapes; (4) state radio; (5) TV (i) state TV, (ii) AIT, (iii) NTA; (5) face to face enlightenment/sensitization/advocacy visits to stakeholders	(1) Government agencies; (2) PESP (EGALF Ventures Ltd); (3) Research institutes; (4) off-takers (Popular Farms and Mills Ltd, FTK Commercials); (5) financial institutions (BOA, CBN, Commercial Banks); (6) NAIC; (7) College of Agriculture; (8) Taraba State University; (9) CSOs, NGOs (T. Y Danjuma); (10) Federal University, Wukari; (11) Kwara State University; (12) Agro-dealers (Popular farms, FTK)



2.3. Strengths and Contributions of KMC Functions to Overall VCDP Achievements

Interviews were held with the SPC, KMC Advisor, the SPCs, the KMCOs, while a Focus Group Discussion (FDG) conducted with SPMU team members in each state. The participants were asked to identify their perceived strengths and contributions of the KMC functions to the overall VCDP achievements in their respective states. The following information was generated in response to this broad question:

- i. A centralized, uniform KMC strategy adopted by all target states enabled VCDP to have coherent and consistent MIS (internal) and external message themes nationwide. This strength has enhanced the media branding of the Project.
- ii. Media coverage of VCDP activities in target states helped to apprise the state and local government authorities of the contributions of the Project to the development of rural roads, irrigation systems, higher yields in rice and cassava production, and postharvest innovations in the two value chains.
- iii. In Taraba State, the KMC function of keeping the state government to be well informed about the Project's contributions to the state, gingered the government's release of its counterpart funding (N70 million). In other words, an effective messaging incentivized the state government to buy into the Project by promptly paying its counterpart funds.
- iv. In all target states, the News Agency of Nigerian (NAN) covered most of the VCDP-sponsored events, and released the news reports on such events both directly and through syndicated channels.
- v. By effectively communicating the activities of the Project on youth in agriculture, some states governments were inspired to sponsor youth groups for agriculture-related skills training and entrepreneurship short-term training in places at places such as the University of Ibadan and the Federal Institute of Industrial Research (FIIR), outside the target states.
- vi. Within VCDP itself, the KMC functions have enhanced a shared vision among SPMU team members in each state due to a better flow of Management Information.
- vii. Due to the visibility of VCDP-assisted activities in target states, there has been a clamour by local government councils that are outside the Project's target localities to be included in the Project. Obviously, this indicates that the VCDP is perceived to be producing positive outcomes and impact in the target localities.
- viii. Some state governments have granted the Project free airtime on state radio and television stations, thereby to ensure that messages are repeated in order to reach more people with the target state. This illustrates the effective use of KMC to incentivize stakeholder buy-in on the Project.
- ix. Reports of VCDP's skills development training for youths on agricultural mechanization in Benue state, led to such trained youths being engaged by USAID-funded activities to replicate the trainings in other parts of the state, as well as in 4 other states.
- x. The KMC unit at NPMU and SPMU is staffed by experienced focal points, and this has enabled the performance of the necessary functions that produced greater visibility for Project, and gingered stakeholder buy-in in target states.



2.4. Desired Improvements on the VCDP's KMC System

Some of the desired improvements on the KMC system are the same across the target states, while some are specific to one or two states. The general improvements desired in all target states are:

- i. An appropriate office space for the KMC unit.
- ii. Better equipment of the KMC unit in each state; the equipment needed include: (a) computers; (b) high-powered digital cameras with enhanced-features e.g. wide-angled lens, higher data-storage capacity, longer lasting battery, combined video and still-shot functions; (c) video editing studio equipment to enhance in-house capacity on production of video documentaries; (d) public address (PA) equipment to enhance dissemination of information to the public or targeted communities; (e) camera tripod; and (f) other audio visual accessories.
- iii. Outreach vans for the KMC unit to facilitate community mobilization in various parts of the state.
- iv. Additional qualified KMC personnel with professional skills to ensure division of labour at each SPMU; or training for existing staff in professional photography, video editing, journalistic reporting, public speaking, and desktop publishing.
- v. Skills training on camera handling and basics of photography for SPMU technical personnel, in order to enhance the quality of visual images captured at various project events where KMCO is absent.
- vi. In-house capacity to produce short documentaries or various topics instead of long, mostly unedited video recordings, or documentaries that are too long to convey short and sharp messages.
- vii. More effective ways of communicating with illiterate audiences e.g. illustrated posters, use of translators who are trained on the subject matter.
- viii. Utilization of multiple media (leaflets, short videos, technical monographs, radio, television, social media e.g. Facebook, WhatsApp) to enhance 2-way communication as well as 1-way information dissemination, whichever is may be appropriate in a given locality.
- ix. A more efficient VCDP website with interactive features to enable uploading of material by each SPMU through a suitable arrangement with the KMC Advisor at NPMU. Or the material could be submitted to the KMC Advisor for proof-reading, review, or editing before being uploaded to the website. But there should be in-house capacity to upload or revise material on the Project's website. Since IFAD has more than just one funded project in Nigeria, perhaps a cost-effective model could involve supporting the creation of an independent KMC facility to serve VCDP and other IFAD-funded projects in the country. This would justify investing the required resources in up-to-date KMC infrastructure, with an envisaged long-term potential for the centre to attain financial self-sustenance.

Some states indicated specific improvements they would like to have in the KMC functions. For example Benue SPMU wants to publish the VCDP newsletter in 3 local dialects. In general, this would be effective if there is the literacy rate among the rural populations in Benue is high. Otherwise, the Consultant recommends that audio (radio or van-mounted public address system) communications in local dialects is more effective in reaching rural audiences than written materials, even in the local languages.

Some KMCOs want to manage the KMC budget, and want to be involved in proposing the budget. It is not clear how these desired changes can be accommodated within the financial budgeting and



administrative regulations of the SPMU. However, these are important issues and there should be forum for discussing these with the SPC in charge.

Some KMCOs want to have a well-equipped in-house studio, in order to reduce the cost of contracting out video production task. This is a good cost-saving idea. It is feasible for such a studio to become an income-generating service provider to project partners and members of the public.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING KMC FUNCTIONS IN VCDP

1. *Quality of Field Activity Videos*: The data collected from some of the target states included video footage of VCDP-assisted field activities. It is recommended that videos be appropriately captioned, and should highlight a specific activity or message rather than open-ended recordings of multiple events in multiple locations. Similarly, the videos should neither be too short (some were less than 20 seconds long), nor too long. VCDP should urgently invest in building in-house skills and appropriate equipment for video capturing and editing, skills on basic story-telling to enhance the preparation of short documentaries with short, targeted messages to specific audiences (e.g. farmers), and the projection of successes or any desired messages to stakeholders and the other audiences.
2. *Photography*: It is said that a good picture tells more than a thousand words. It is recommended that VCDP should invest in acquisition of high-capacity cameras, and in-house training on camera use and handling, in order to improve the quality of images captured of VCDP-assisted activities in the field. All the SPMUs expressed the need for cameras with wide-angled lenses, tripods, longer lasting camera batteries, and soft data external storage devices.
3. *Greater financial commitments to KMC*: All SPMUs expressed a strong need for more budget commitments to KMC-related priorities. The point was made that the observed inadequate office accommodation and understaffed KMC units in the respective states, was a result of inadequate financial commitment by the Project to KMC functions. It is recommended that KMC units within the Project be boosted financially, logistically, and with more skilled personnel as a strategy for boosting the Project's general visibility. As illustrated in the Taraba scenario, a state government would be more likely to buy into the Project by paying its counterpart funding, if the Project conveys a stronger media profile and esteem, thereby showing that the Project is supporting the government's agricultural priorities, policies and programmes.
4. *Training for staff*: It is recommended that some of the skills-building related to KMC functions should not be restricted to the KMC unit personnel alone. For example training on camera use and handling, video capturing and story scripting should be extended to other relevant staff of SPMUs in order to deepen and broaden the pool of skills, and thereby improve the overall quality and performance of KMC services and products.
5. *Integrating KMC functions to achieve Project objectives*: It is important to integrate the objectives and operations of KMC at both NPMU and SPMUs toward achieving the Project's corporate objectives and priorities. This means that KMC functions should serve both internal and external objectives of the Project; the internal objectives being a shared vision and direction for all project personnel through an efficient and effective Management Information System (MIS) which is integral to project management and coordination functions. Similarly, the external objectives include keeping all project partners well informed of problems, efforts and outcomes of such efforts. Partners include the FGN, state governments, IFAD, intended project beneficiaries, the project donors/counterpart funders, related policymakers, the private sector, and the general public. It is therefore recommended that other units within VCDP should see the KMC as a central resource and not as an isolated unit.



6. It should be noted that while all information is data, not all data is information, and while all knowledge is information, not all information is knowledge. Therefore, the KMC functions should be actively solicited to give meaning to M&E data, financial data, and operations data, in order to provide coherence and appropriate narratives to the data and information generated by these various functions, thereby conveying messages that serve the strategic corporate interests of VCDP.
7. The evolving independence of the KMC unit from the M&E unit in each SPMU should serve as an opportunity to have greater professionalism, division of labour, efficiency and effectiveness, to ensure the achievement of the Project's KMC objectives.
8. *Knowledge sharing forums*: It is recommended that each SPMU should plan to utilize the field activity videos as training aids during pre-season and in-season training of farmers or farmers' representatives, and post-harvest training for agro processors. The audio and video tapes should therefore benefit the project's partners and the external audiences. The audio and video messages should be in the applicable local languages rather than in English only. This will increase local identification with the Project and ownership of the processes and the knowledge generated or disseminated.
9. *Interactive Project website*: It is recommended that the Project's website should have at least two uploads of data and reports each week. For example, each SPMU could be given a day of the week or specific dates of each month when they would be required to provide new stories for upload on the project's website. The NPMU could have a weekly slot for announcements and other targeted communications to partners. There should be a joint work plan between the KMC, M&E, and ICT functions or the responsible webmaster on how to discharge this integration.
10. *Projecting the role of innovation platforms*: Due to the strong emphasis and high priority that was given to the formation of VCDP-assisted innovation platforms (IPs) during the Project's kick-off phase, it is recommended that the KMC unit in each state should generate knowledge products (reports, video/audio tapes, radio/TV programmes etc.) on activities of innovation platforms. Furthermore, innovation platform meetings should serve as channels for disseminating knowledge products as well training for representatives of the various groups within the IPs.
11. *Learning through Mission Reports*: Every six months, the FGN-IFAD Supervision Mission is conducted, and a Mission Report is made for use by the FGN, IFAD, and the NPMU. The report typically contains important learning points derived from the implemented VCDP-assisted activities, in line with the Project Implementation Plan. Then, an Aide Memoire is issued highlighting the key findings, and specifying the next steps to be taken by (i) the FGN; (ii) IFAD; and (iii) the Project's NPMU. In effect, the periodic supervision missions are opportunities for collaborative learning, and the Mission Report is an important knowledge product. Therefore, it is recommended that VCDP should more consciously enable the KMC unit at both NPMU and SPMU to work closely with the M&E unit, strengthen their research and writing (e.g. desktop publishing) capabilities, and set ambitious targets for them to achieve.
12. *Mainstreaming New Knowledge from the Project into the Agriculture Policy Loop*: It is remarkable that most of the Project's personnel were seconded from the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD). This provides a strategic opportunity for the Project to build the technical capacity of these staff, who could eventually return to the Ministry with new/better knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) that would inform more effective agricultural policies in the near future.



13. Last but not the least, it is recommended that the Project's knowledge products should be in the form and format that best suits the local context of the intended audiences. Standardization of VCDP's KMC products should not be pursued at the expense of relevance to the local context of the intended audiences. For example, given the low literacy level of most smallholder agricultural economic actors in Nigeria, printed matter of the right type (e.g. illustrated posters) should be more widely used instead text-intensive field manuals. Furthermore, targeted innovative radio programs in local languages are likely to reach more people than television announcements. Where the objective is community mobilization, there should be use of audio announcement through traditional town criers, or religious congregations e.g. churches or mosques, or community theatre (dramas, dances, masquerades) or age grade meetings or the village hierarchy.

END

4. SETS OF MATERIALS SUBMITTED

- A. HARD & SOFT COPIES OF CONSULTANT'S FINAL REPORT (plus Appendices A, B & C)
- B. APPENDIX A: COPY OF CONTRACT DOCUMENT
- C. APPENDIX B: COPY OF CONSULTANT'S INCEPTION REPORT
- D. APPENDIX C: COPIES OF QUESTION GUIDES AND DATA COLLECTED
 - C1. ANAMBRA SPMU
 - C2. BENUE SPMU
 - C3. EBONYI SPMU
 - C4. NIGER SPMU
 - C5. OGUN SPMU
 - C6. TARABA SPMU
- E. SAMPLES OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION PRODUCTS VOLUME 1
- F. SAMPLES OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION PRODUCTS VOLUME 2
- G. SAMPLES OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION PRODUCTS IN AUDIO AND VIDEO FORMATS (7 COMPACT DISCS, 2 ANALOGUE VIDEO TAPES & 1 FLASH DRIVE)