Communication strategy

Good communication along the whole impact pathway is critical for RICE to deliver its development impacts. Good communication contributes to the achievement of research outcomes at different scales; it enhances program visibility and demonstrates accountability by widely sharing program results. The RICE communication strategy builds on the six elements proposed by the CGIAR as follows.

1. Communicate and engage with partners

RICE will use various mechanisms to communicate and engage with partners, continuing the main engagement mechanisms—such as consortia, networks, and platforms—established under GRiSP and as described in the GRiSP Partnership report and in Annex 2 (Partnership strategy). The most important means of engagement with partners will be joint planning and conduct of research, and joint analysis and publication of results. Other means will include annual planning and review meetings, site visits, group excursions, staff exchange, workshops, and various staff hosting arrangements. Participatory and collaborative approaches to research and development are key engagement methods for joint learning and capacity development. Most partner engagements take place at the flagship project level, though certain activities will cut across several or all of the RICE FPs.

Communication plays a crucial role in capacity development, especially among the various partners of RICE: research partners, development and scaling partners, farmers, and other value-chain actors (Annex 3). RICE communication methods in capacity development are tailored to purpose, and vary from one-on-one on-the-job interactions, and classroom-type training (including lectures, hands-on exercises, practical field work, group work, excursions, and field visits) delivered in-country or at CGIAR centers, to long-distance learning. Communication materials (manuals, text books, instruction videos, self-learning materials, fact sheets, videos, etc.) for capacity development will be maintained and shared through such Web sites as the Rice Knowledge Bank and RiceHub.

2. Promote learning and sharing of information to improve communications and collaboration

RICE will use a range of mechanisms to promote learning and sharing of information among partners and stakeholders. A main mechanism will be the establishment of multistakeholder platforms —mechanisms that allow interactions along the rice value chain and/or within a particular farming system environment among stakeholders who share a common goal to improve mutual understanding, create trust, define roles, and engage in joint action within a value chain and/or farming systems context. Learning alliances are multistakeholder platforms that place special emphasis on capturing lessons from joint development and implementation of successful interventions in repetitive, progressive learning cycles. Such platforms are catalyzed in FP1, but operate in all RICE FPs. For example, FP2 will organize learning alliances around the development, testing, introduction, and evaluation of improved postharvest equipment; FP3 will organize regional, hub-level learning alliances that cut

across agronomy, postharvest activities, and other disciplines.

As with communicating with actors on the ground (element 2 above), typical communication tools will include participatory impact pathway mapping (PIPA), stakeholder and outcome mapping, problem-tree definition and analysis, and joint evaluation of results.

RICE will use a variety of measures (as explained in Annex 6 on Results-based management) to support learning from the monitoring and evaluation information collected:

- Annual workshops to reflect on performance and risk information collected throughout the year; to review and (if need be) revise the theories of change; reflect on and adjust to any evaluation; and review findings
- Adjusting and prioritizing RICE implementation in line with the evidence collected
- Documenting lessons learned and best practices (e.g., meta-synthesis of lessons from evaluations)
- Knowledge management and information sharing
- Following-up on learning decisions, including actions plans in response to evaluation recommendations

RICE will also employ academic tools for sharing information, such as reports, peer-reviewed publications, manuals, workshops, conferences, and academic fora. Scientific publications and books will be shared on an open-access basis through such Web sites as Rice books, IRRI, Rice publications, IRRI , Rice publications, AfricaRice, and Publications, CIAT. RICE will foster a culture of copublication with partners. Mass media products will also be developed: press releases, most-significant-change stories, blogs, radio broadcasts, video clips, interviews, and newspaper and popular magazine articles. Modern ICT tools will be used, including cellphone technology, Web sites, and podcasts. Annually, RICE will organize thematic (both within and cutting across FPs) and regional workshops and support the participation of its partners and stakeholders. Increasingly, through the process of site integration, workshops will be coorganized with other CRPs. Annually, in four year cycles, RICE will organize, respectively, an Africa Rice conference, a Latin America Rice Conference, and a Global Rice Congress—with no conference in the fourth year. These conferences will bring together hundreds of scientists from across the globe to present and discuss breakthroughs in rice science.

3. Engage with actors on the ground to scale-out technologies and practices

At the local level, CoA1.3 will establish multistakeholder platforms that will interface with major scaling partners from the public and private sector to scale-out RICE technologies and services. Scaling partners include national extension services; policymakers in national research, technology, agriculture, and rural development ministries; the private sector; international development and donor agencies; and NGOs. CoA1.3 promotes linkages between multistakeholder platforms at action sites and scaling partners. Successful scaling-out of RICE technologies and services requires that policymakers and decision makers create and maintain a favorable policy environment. Hence, CoA1.3 links with policy activities across RICE from national to global levels. Typical communication tools used among local stakeholders and actors on the ground are participatory impact pathway mapping (PIPA), stakeholder and outcome mapping, and problem-tree definition and analysis.

4. Communicate about the program, the science, results, and progress

RICE will use an array of tools to communicate about its progress and results. It will establish a dedicated RICE Web site that will link to its management information system to showcase up-to-date progress on research results, outcomes, and impacts. Individual RICE projects will have separate Web sites for more detailed reporting, such as CORIGAP, CSISA, CURE, FLAR,STRASA, and the Africa Rice Task Forces (to name only a few). Other communication materials include newsletters (e.g., CURE Matters, RIPPLE, STRASA), media briefs, radio and TV interviews, audio and video clips, podcasts, and blogs.

The RICE Web site will also be the main portal for hosting documents pertaining to transparent governance and accountability: complete text of the pre-proposal and full proposal, annual reports, annual work plans, review and evaluation reports, composition and terms of reference of the Independent Science Committee, composition and terms of reference of the program and flagship project management teams, minutes of meetings, etc. It will also contain a repository of presentations about RICE and its achievements, such as PowerPoint presentations, brochures, flyers, and posters.

5. Engage in policy dialogue to scale-up results

RICE will engage in local, national, and regional policy dialogues. At the local level, CoA1.3 will establish multistakeholder platforms (see # 2 above). Policy-oriented multistakeholder platforms will interface with major scaling partners from the public and private sector (see below). Successful scaling-out of RICE technologies and services beyond the local level requires that policymakers and decision makers create and maintain a favorable policy environment. RICE will continue to use the mechanisms practiced in GRiSP to engage with policymakers. At the national level, bilateral country dialogues will focus on the development of policies conducive to development of the rice sector. Recent examples from GRiSP are the dialogues and rice sector development engagements organized with the Lao PDR, Myanmar, Senegal, and Vietnam. Through the Council for Partnership on Rice Research in Asia (CORRA), and the Coalition for African Rice Development (CARD), RICE will continue to collaborate with Asian and African countries, respectively, to develop national rice development strategies and to ensure that the activities of RICE are derived from national priorities and that its results are mainstreamed in the development process. RICE will also foster strategies to facilitate cross-border sharing of knowledge and germplasm, such as the successful agreement promoted by IRRI under GRiSP among India, Bangladesh, and Nepal to fast-track registration of varieties from across the three countries based on common protocols. RICE will conduct analyses of potential implications of regional and global trade agreements on national rice sectors and rice food security. Through its participating centers, RICE engages with regional and global development fora, such as APAARI, ASARECA, CAADP (NEPAD), CORAF, ECOWAS, FARA, FORAGRO, and SAARC. Through IRRI, which has observer status at ASEAN, RICE will continue to engage in policymaking at the regional level in Southeast Asia. RICE will continue to organize ministerial roundtable meetings in Africa and Asia. Typical tools used to communicate results are blog posts, policy briefs and policy information, country strategy reports, and media releases (hyperlinks refer to examples from GRiSP, as will be continued in RICE).

6. Make research program information and resources open and accessible

The RICE strategy to make its information and resources open and accessible is detailed in the RICE open-access and intellectual asset management strategies (sections 1.0.12 and 1.0.13 of the RICE proposal; sections 2.x.1.11 of each FP therein; and annexes 9 and 10).

RICE does not aim to duplicate communication efforts undertaken by its participating centers. Instead, it applies principles of subsidiarity with the centers' communication strategies and tools to reduce costs and increase efficiency. Around 60–70% of the AfricaRice and IRRI R&D portfolio will be part of RICE; thus, there will be many cross-links from RICE to the centers' communication efforts. For example, research results obtained as part of RICE and communicated by one of the centers will be linked to RICE.

IRRI, as lead center, will coordinate the overall RICE communication strategy. Each partner will share in the implementation and delivery of the strategy. A RICE communication team will have participants from each participating RICE center, and will be led by IRRI. Each year, a communication plan will be developed and presented for approval to the RICE management team.

Table 14.1 summarizes the approaches and tools that will be used to effectively engage with stakeholders to achieve development outcomes at the FP level, and the approaches and tools to raise visibility and demonstrate accountability at CRP level.

Table 14.1. RICE Communication approaches and tools.

CRP level	
Approaches and tools	• RICE Web site, podcasts, press releases, blogs, radio broadcasts, video clips, interviews, and newspaper and popular magazines articles
	• Congresses, conferences, fora, workshops, policy dialogues, participation at national and international (regional, global) events, participation in regional fora such as GCARD, CARD, CAADP, ECOWAS, APAARI, ASEAN (see GRiSP Partnership report for more examples)
	• Results-based management tools: annual workshops to reflect on performance, review and revision of the theories of change, reflection on and adjusting to any evaluation and review findings, adjusting and prioritizing RICE implementation in line with the evidence collected, documenting lessons learned and best practices, knowledge management and information sharing, and following-up on learning decisions
Flagship project level	
Approaches and tools	• Multistakeholder platforms: learning alliances, innovation platforms; annual project planning and review meetings, site visits, group excursions, staff exchanges, project workshops, and various staff hosting arrangements
	• Joint planning and conduct of research, and joint analysis and publication of results
	• Project Web site, podcasts, press releases, blogs, radio broadcasts, video clips, interviews, and newspaper and popular magazines articles
	• Congresses, conferences, fora, workshops, policy dialogues (FP1), and participation at national and international (regional, global) events