

Research Communication Policy (RCP) for the Health Policy Research Group (HPRG), University of Nigeria (2023-2028)



hprg



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“Research is incomplete without communication. Tell it to the next person.”

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1. About Health Policy Research Group (HPRG)

Health policy research group (HPRG) is a foremost health research institute in West Africa, hosted at the University of Nigeria. Established in 2002, the institute is covered by the legal incorporation of the College of Medicine of the University of Nigeria, Enugu-Campus. It is driven by the vision of being a best stop for research evidence on health systems and policies that will impact society and improve health across the African region, especially Nigeria.

HPRG is noted for its multidisciplinary approach to health systems and policy research, hence, it pulls together the finest of researchers from different disciplines such as the health sciences, pharmaceutical sciences, social sciences, environmental sciences, humanities, to mention but a few. Central to the ideal of HPRG is research impact and implementation, technically referred to as “applied research”. And so, the institute prides itself in research communication that targets policymakers, media, programme developers and implementers, frontliners, academia, and the public.

2. HPRG’s research communication ecosystem

At HPRG, we believe that the glue holding research, impact, and sustainability is communications (also referred in this manual as comms). To achieve successful research communication, an understanding of the research communication ecosystem is important. From decades of research experience, HPRG has designed its research communication ecosystem (see Figure 1), with the hope of using an efficient research communication strategy to hold all components of the ecosystem together.

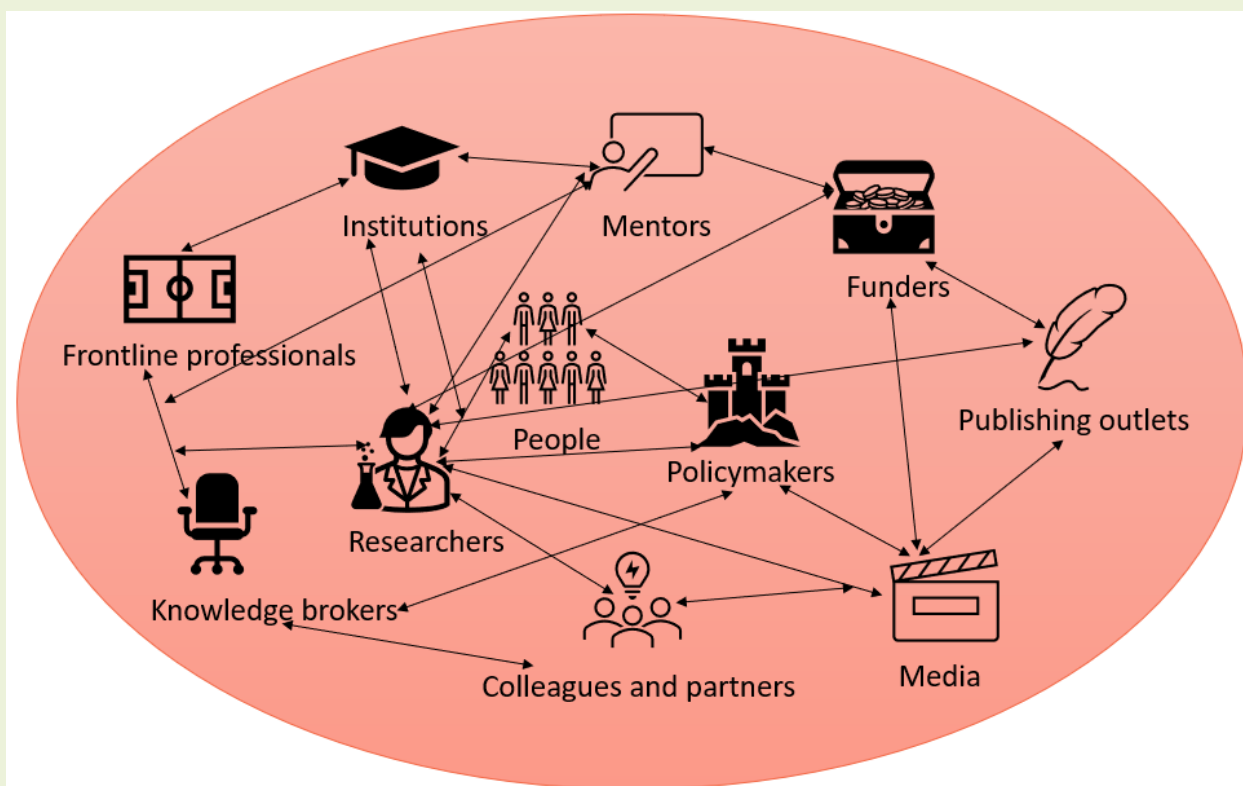


Figure 1: HPRG's research communication ecosystem

The ecosystem as shown in Figure 1 points to the complex web of research society and targets. It reflects directions for getting research from data to action and sustainability of appreciation, uptake, and use of research evidence. Thus, we consider four key actors, which can be represented by the acronym, CAMP. Details are shown in Figure 2.

- Community actors (C)
- Academia (A)
- Media (M)
- Policymakers/Programme developers and implementers (P)

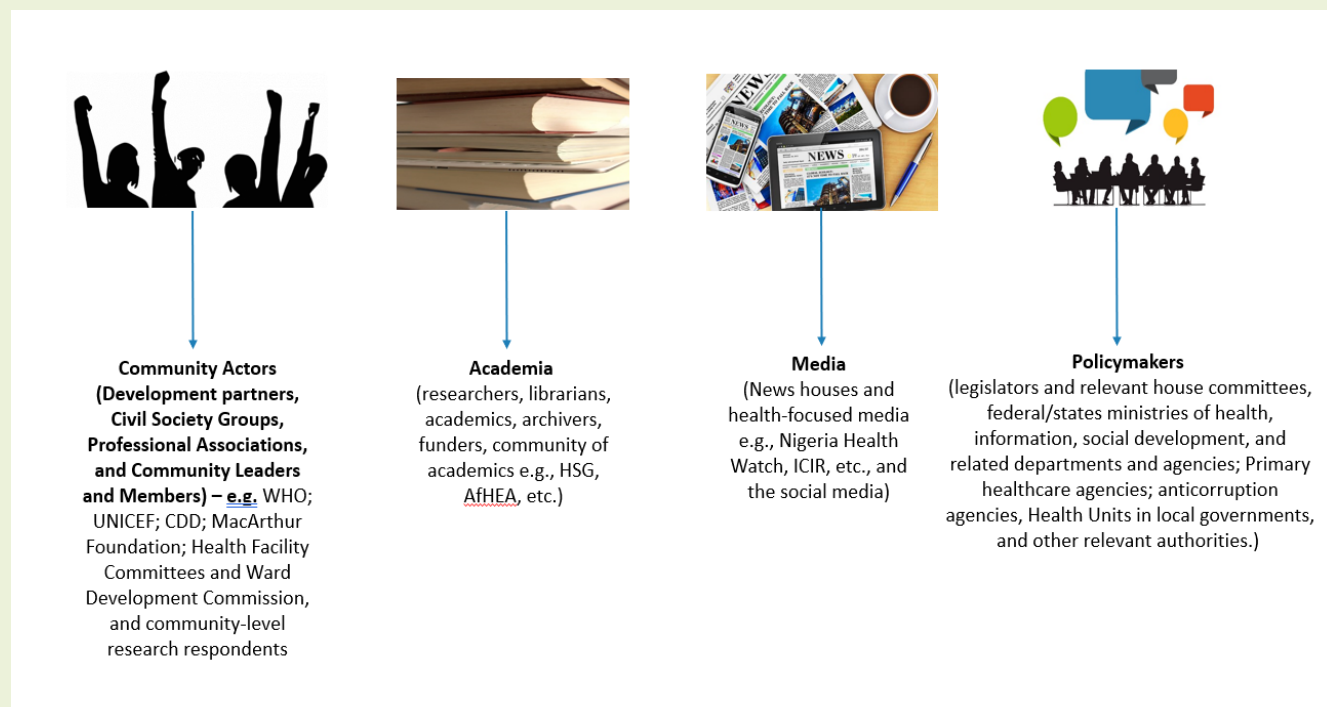


Figure 2: Research communication actors

3. Research communication strategies

At the HPRG, we are keen about context specific communication strategies that are designed to reach specific targets and essentially utilize unique approaches to communicate varying unique research information. We believe that these kinds of strategies will help achieve the purpose of moving research from data into the public space and eventually to pursue evidence-informed tangible changes in the society. Therefore, we have put together an architectural collection of all communication tools we deploy in the achievement of our communication aims (see figure 3), and engagement plans for different sets of our research targets.

Policy Actors and Community leadership engagement
(Workshops, Policy Dialogues, Debriefing of research findings eg using policy briefs, Summits, and Technical Working Groups)

Academic forums
(Conferences, Course Teachings, Public Lectures, and Symposiums)

Publications (journals, technical reports, blogs, columns, chapters, policy briefs)

Media and Social Media engagement (Tweets and Twitter Spaces, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Facebook, webinars, and Instagram for photographic info., podcasts, press releases and press conferences)

Comics, cartoons, podcasts, films, radio phone-ins, public speaking engagements, townhall, community group campaigns, and infographics

Interviews and group discussions that encourage active conversations with respondents that can inspire awareness and action where expedient

Figure 3: HPRG's research communication tools

4. HPRG's research communication governance

The communication plans and strategies of HPRG are strategically governed by an agreed set of indicators designed by researchers and communication professionals. These indicators inspire and regulate all communication-related activities of HPRG and form the core research communication objectives of HPRG. They are: (1) Achieve mutually beneficial relationship within the research communication ecosystem (2) Design and conduct strategic communication of health systems evidence in ways that are fit-for-audience and set agenda for purposeful conversations and actions (3) Pursue research communication as a responsibility (4) Enable capacity building across the research communication ecosystem for seamless communication and uptake of research evidence. Figure 4 presents HPRG's communication governance framework.

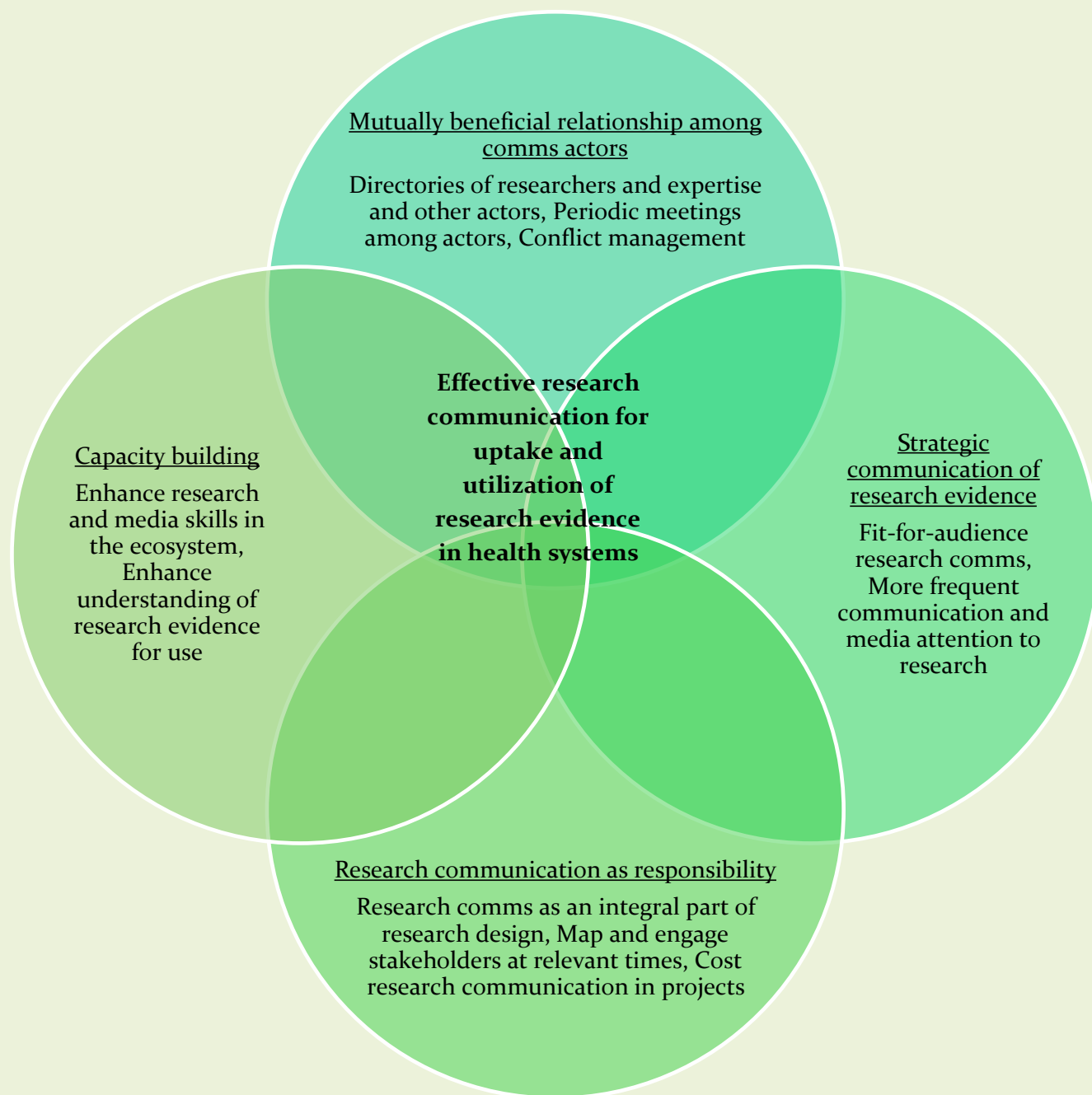


Figure 4: HPRG's communication governance framework (see Annex for expanded version)

5. HPRG's research communication engagement activities

5.1 For policy actors and community leadership

To encourage the use of research evidence, policymakers and community actors should cultivate and nurture interest for scientific evidence and its utilization. HPRG's communication engagements with policy actors and leaders in communities will be to encourage them to value scientific evidence and make use of it. These policy actors and community leadership are persons in authority positions capable of influencing change. In Nigeria, they comprise the Executive and Legislature across national and subnational governments, and key actors at the state/local government/ward levels, such as the Officers in Charge of health facilities, Local Government Immunization Officer (LIO), Programmes' Focal Persons, Disease Surveillance Notification Officer (DSNO), Executive Secretary of the State Primary Healthcare Development Agency (SPHCDA), Director of the Universal Health Coverage Office, Director of Primary Healthcare, Ward Development Commission (WDC) leadership, Health Facility Committee leadership, paramount rulers, Town Union leaders, and the leaders of subgroups in communities, among others. These people are pivotal to implementation of scientific evidence. Therefore, to engage them, we will:

1. Create opportunities to meet informally as a way of building rapport and discussing the significance of scientific evidence to policymaking and frontline engagement.
2. Co-create and co-design research ideas, plans, and interventions with relevant stakeholders at policymaking, frontline, and community corridors.
3. Utilize 'active' interview sessions that can inspire awareness and commitment to action.
4. Share distilled academic materials for a non-technical audience and newsletters with them, using direct mailing or messaging, social media tags, and providing hard copies where available.

5. Invite and treat them to discourse forums such as policy dialogues, public panel discussions, research findings debriefing, data validation sessions, workshops, etc.
6. Feed them into active Technical Working Groups (TWGs) where research tools can be co-created, and findings can be double-checked, interrogated, and adopted.
7. Invite high-level stakeholders to radio phone-in programmes for public conversations on vital issues that will emerge from HPRG's studies.
8. Discuss HPRG's studies at summits, including public speaking engagements that are connected to scientific evidence, such as TED talks, etc. And share the products and outcomes of such meetings with the policymakers, even when they might have attended.
9. Organise townhall meetings to bridge communication divides between communities and policymakers in connection to HPRG's research findings.

5.2 For academia, development partners, and funders

This group of people comprise technical audiences that are helpful in the areas of technical conversations, criticisms, citations, technical partnerships, academic debates, and funding. They include academic staff across tertiary institutions, researchers, students, and bilateral/multilateral organisations. To target this group of persons, we will:

1. Publish research outputs in high-ranking journals, and as blogs, news columns, and technical reports, which will be shared publicly or to direct social media and email accounts of academic stakeholders across tertiary institutions, researchers, and the representatives of relevant bilateral/multilateral organisations.
2. Encourage the use of comics, cartoons, infographics, podcasts, and films, which we will share publicly or directly to the social media and email accounts of those that comprise this group.
3. Utilize Google Scholar, ResearchGate and other such platforms for dissemination of research publications. Blogs and technical reports that would not be automatically picked by Google Scholar and ResearchGate can be manually uploaded. This is

because of the high search engine optimization ranking enjoyed by Google Scholar and ResearchGate.

4. Organise symposiums and TWGs for high-level technical conversations on the issues emerging from our research.
5. Publish technical reports which can be working papers, and policy briefs, for submission to funders. If the need arises, we will discuss findings from submitted documents with funders and use such an opportunity to design and agree on ways forward.
6. Organise virtual and physical public lectures and webinars in our universities to stimulate academic debates on vital areas of our research.
7. Feed critical areas of our research into course modules in health systems and policies, with the ambition of having them as standalone courses in future.
8. Encourage HPRG researchers to regularly present thematic issues of our research at conferences, especially conferences that have global, regional, national, and local significance.
9. Share newsletters (quarterly) that sum the progress of HPRG research engagements across academia and policymaking.
10. Operate a regularly updated online repository of HPRG publications where scholars can have free access to them on the HPRG [website](#).

5.3 For media and social media

Aggressive publicity is at the heart of research communication. Hence, the mainstream media, social media, and web space are indispensable. Interestingly, HPRG already has ongoing media and public relations partnerships, which will be leveraged to advance research communication at this level. To continue and deepen media and social media engagements, we will:

1. Organize “research-focused” press meetings that will pull together the TV, Radio, Print, and new media (bloggers, etc.), as outputs from this engagement are usually widely disseminated across the nation and region, reaching a large audience.

2. Conduct media analysis of HPRG's projects and use the results from the analysis to design and adapt context-specific research communication strategies for projects.
3. Build and fund research communication plans into HPRG's projects based on HPRG's Research Communication Policy (RCP).
4. Create directories of HPRG's researchers and their expertise for media engagement.
5. Foster collaborative relationships between HPRG and the media using courtesy calls to media leadership, researchers-media collaborative field visits, regular updates of media practitioners with HPRG's research findings, and regular trainings for media practitioners and researchers based on research/media value and use.
6. Upload all HPRG's projects to <https://hprgunn.com/>, including publishing news, blogs, and vital details of HPRG's projects' engagements on the website.
7. Presentations at conferences and key gatherings of academics, policymakers, and the public will be uploaded to the HPRG's website and communicated widely.
8. As and when necessary, invite the News Agency of Nigeria to attend some of our research engagements.
9. Encourage HPRG's researchers to own social media accounts, with emphasis on Twitter and LinkedIn, and they will be advised to actively engage contents that are relevant to our studies.
10. Pull HPRG's researchers and other stakeholders into WhatsApp Groups for the purpose of rapidly sharing and discussing contents that are connected to studies conducted by HPRG, including expert contributions.
11. Share research outputs across social media platforms through personal and institutional handles and pages.
12. Pursue the principle of "community sharing", which means HPRG's researchers being obligated to share and re- share research outputs from HPRG, its members, and partners.
13. Publish newsletters (quarterly) to sum the progress of HPRG research engagements across academia and policymaking.
14. Provide HPRG's website analysis to projects' teams.

15. Share research outputs in ways that attract readership (e.g., using pictures, screenshots, and thumbnails), and tagging relevant stakeholders. A list of stakeholders to tag include:

- @Fmohnigeria (Federal Ministry of Health)
- @Nphcda (National Primary Health Care Development Agency)
- @macfound (MacArthur Foundation)
- @TheICIR (Media on investigating reporting)
- @officialEFCC (Financial Crimes Commission)
- @ICPC_PE (Corrupt Practices Commission)
- @ACE_soas (Anti-Corruption Evidence)
- @U4_ACRC (Anticorruption Resource Centre)
- @U4_ACRC (anticorruption resource cent)
- @NgScienceAcad (Nigeria Academy of Science)
- @nighealthwatch (Nigeria Health Watch)
- @FMICNigeria (Min of Information and Culture)
- @NOA_Nigeria (National Orientation Agency)
- @CDDWestAfrica (Cent for Dem and Development)
- @AHOPlatform (African Health Observatory Platform)
- @NOIPolls (NOI Polls)
- @AfHEA (African Health Economics and Policy Association)
- @TrackaNG (TrackaNG)
- @BudgITng (BudgIT Nigeria)
- @gatesfoundation (Gates Foundation)
- @channelstv (Channels Television)
- @officialEFCC (Economic and Financial Crimes Commission)
- @SERAPNigeria (SERAP)
- @LSHTM (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine)
- @HPRG_Nigeria (Health Policy Research Group, University of Nigeria)
- @FSS_UNN (Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Nigeria)

- WANEL (West African network of Emerging leaders in HPSR)

5.4 For the public

The public comprises of everyone that spans society. They are the main reason we do research and should be an integral part of our communications plan. To involve them, we will:

1. Strive for fair involvement of research participants to give them a voice and actively involve them in our study.
2. Encourage 'active' interview sessions with respondents in ways that can inspire awareness and commitment to action.
3. Based on need, organise townhall meetings with community members.
4. Encourage the use of comics, cartoons, infographics, podcasts, and films, which we will share publicly on social media or to email contacts or during physical engagements with the public.
5. Publications, such as academic papers, blogs, policy briefs, etc., will be thrown to the public through social media, direct emailing, and publicly pasted adverts, albeit non-technically.
6. Organise Twitter Spaces regularly to discuss in very lay terms the contents and findings of our research and providing ample time for the public to ask questions and give feedback.
7. Utilize radio phone-ins to inform and engage the public on critical areas of our studies.
8. Ensure that research outputs in public domain must always imbibe down-to-earth communication and responses from the public to such communications must be professionally attended to.
9. Make sure that comments' sections on research outputs are always open for public engagement.

10. Publicly share newsletters that document research progress and impacts to stimulate and sustain the interest of the public on the importance and outputs of research evidence.
11. Organise activities that will involve students in secondary and primary schools to make contributions to research knowledge and learn to value research evidence and procedures.

6. Evaluation and sustainability

The communication strategies in this manual are subject to intermittent review on the bases of effectiveness, projects' demands, skills updates, research ethics, and global best practices. Also, approaches to guarantee succession will be prioritized. Therefore, we will:

1. Utilize jet plug-ins to determine and assess the reach of our website information.
2. Establishing HPRG's communication team to regularly interface with leads of all HPRG projects for timely facilitation of information around the research ecosystem.
3. HPRG communications team regularly engage other HPRG researchers across projects to gain feedback on how they feel about the strengths and weaknesses of the HPRG research communication engagements.
4. Report communications progress at least twice each year.
5. Targeted communications skills development across the HPRG team, including sponsorship for communications skills update.
6. Monitor feedback across the various engagement plans and strategies for proper conduct of evaluation.
7. Regular maintenance of HPRG's website and update with latest technological innovations.

7. Conclusion

At HPRG, research communication is at the heart of our research efforts, as we are committed to amplifying our research findings through academic and non-academic means and sustaining the gains of our projects across the research communications ecosystem. We are committed to extending the reach of our generated evidence across policymaking actors, community actors, academia, development partners, mainstream media, social media, funders, and public.

The key goals are:

- i) to constantly have conversations about HPRG's research outputs in the domains of academic, public, policymaking, and global frontiers, and
- ii) To ultimately inspire/guide feasible, adoptable, and sustainable research evidence translation into effective decision making/implementation for governance and development.

Acknowledgement

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Annex: Expanded research communication governance framework of HPRG

Objectives	Activities	Outputs	Actors	Trackers
<p>To establish sustainable and mutually beneficial relationships among the media, researchers, policymakers, and community actors</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Map research and media institutions at federal and state levels. 2. Submit lists of researchers and their expertise to media partners. 3. Organise periodic meetings for stakeholders. 4. Courtesy calls to relevant partners within the comms ecosystem 5. Develop conflict management guidelines and strategies among stakeholders. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improved and sustained relationship among stakeholders in the research communication ecosystem. 2. Regular and periodic meetings of stakeholders, maybe twice a year. 3. Developed conflict management guidelines. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. HPRG and other research organisations 2. Media outlets (TV, Radio, Print, Blogs) 3. Non-government Organisations 4. Policymakers in government 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Accessible research directory 2. Sustained communication with the actors led by HPRG 3. Adherence to conflict management concerns and guidelines 4. Review of the comms engagement every 2 years based on evolution of events
<p>To use audience-fit strategic communication to improve engagements in health systems based on appreciation of research evidence by the</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Frequent press releases 2. Regular features of HPRG researchers and their research outputs, as well as 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased media attention of HPRG and its activities 2. Appreciation of research evidence and commitment to utilization by 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. HPRG Communications Lead 2. HPRG coordinators, researchers, principal 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regular communication of media performance report. 2. Documentation of policy

<p>media, policymakers, and the public</p>	<p>expert contributions on media outlets</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Publication of position papers on topical health issues in the country. 4. Effective and strategic use of social media, among other media campaigns in dissemination of research evidence. 5. Using workshops, policy briefs, policy dialogues, and short/simple research communication tools to target policymakers. 6. Attendance at conferences, symposiums, and academic summits for the communication of research evidence 	<p>stakeholders in the research communication ecosystem</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Improved awareness of research findings in health systems and policy 	<p>investigators, and project managers</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Health correspondents 4. Community leaders and opinion shapers 5. Policymakers in government 6. Academic institutions and leadership 	<p>outcomes from conducted studies.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Conduct public opinion polls based on HPRG's vigorously communicated research evidence. 4. Public lectures and curriculum development using HPRG's research breakthroughs.
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	<p>and expert contributions.</p> <p>7. Mainstreaming research breakthroughs of HPRG into academic curriculums.</p> <p>8. Republishing published HPRG's articles on media platforms following adherence to republishing agreements.</p>			
<p>To offer research communication as much commitment that is offered to the conduct of research</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Appointment and mainstream research comms lead in HPRG projects. 2. Develop a database for research comms stakeholders. 3. Mainstream research comms plan in all HPRG projects. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Budget template for research communication 2. Keeping up with the media space and emergence of modifications and new media outlets relevant to HPRG's research communication 3. Regular training of research comms lead and team 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. HPRG's comms lead 2. HPRG's finance team 3. HPRG researchers, principal investigators, and project managers 4. Media outlets (TV, Radio, Print, Blogs) 5. Funders 6. Non-government Organisations 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Update database of research comms stakeholders intermittently 2. Comms lead provide media analysis report to HPRG 3. Comms lead ensures sustainability by making succession provisions

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Cost research comms in HPRG projects. 5. Commit to the research comms plan as designed. 6. Solicit private sponsorship of HPRG's research communication engagement, including waivers. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Comms lead contributes to comms aspects of HPRG's research proposal 5. Private funding and waivers of HPRG's research communication engagement. 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Submit waiver requests to research communication partners
To build capacities of media professionals to appreciate and report issues from research findings and capacity of researchers to use media	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bi-annual training for various categories of media practitioners in HPRG's target locations. 2. Organise field visits together with media professionals. 3. Organise courtesy calls to media leadership, communicating HPRG's research evidence and usefulness. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased understanding of research findings by media and other stakeholders. 2. More publicity of HPRG's research findings. 3. At least 1 field visit with media actors each year and 6 courtesy visits to media leadership and policymakers 4. At least 2 trainings for media and research professionals each year. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. HPRG researchers 2. Management of media organisations 3. Policymakers in government 4. Media outlets (TV, Radio, Print, Blogs) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Training/ activity reports 2. Regular communication between researchers, media, and policymakers. 3. Increased coverage and awareness of research findings in media, communities, and at policymaking corridors.

	4. Organise annual media retreat for HPRG's researchers to improve media skills and use.			
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