



# **Regional Arab Network Against AIDS (RANAA)**

## **Communication Strategy 2013-2017**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

RANAA wishes to acknowledge the valuable contributions **of** :

**Mrs. Amal Elias Sleiman & Mr. Gilbert Rizk for helping in developing this document.**

**&**

**The Joint United Nations  
Programme on HIV/AIDS UNAIDS**



**The International HIV/AIDS  
Alliance**



**for their technical and financial Support.**

*“This publication was made possible through the support provided by the office of the US Agency for international development. The opinion expressed herein, are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the US Agency for international development.”*

# **Table of Content**

## **1.Executive Summary**

## **2.Introduction**

## **3. Assignment and Methodology**

## **4.Assessment of the Current Communication Situation at RANAA**

### **4.1 Internal & External strengths and Weaknesses**

### **4.2 Communication & Promotional materials**

### **4.3 Conclusion**

## **5.Proposed Strategy**

### **5.1 Description**

### **5.2 Objectives**

### **5.3 Activities & indicators**

### **5.4 Priorities & Pre-requisites (HR & Financial)**

## **6. Action Plan 2013**

## **7. List of Appendices**

## 1. Executive Summary

The regional/Arab Network against AIDS RANAA operates in a volatile region that faces many political, economical and social challenges.

The political situation has seen certain changes in power, some of which are intolerant and the presence of punitive laws might lead to additional stigmatization and/or discrimination that hinders the work of the civil society in combating HIV/AIDS.

The economic factor has seen a dwindling of resources from the international funding organization for HIV/AIDS in some countries of the MENA region.

The youth on the other hand are starting to speak up through the use of the social media – which has proven to be a very powerful tool of communication during the Arab Spring.

On the internal level, RANAA had no communication strategy in place. It has been operating on very limited human resources and very basic communication tools, together with a lack of full commitment and engagement from RANAA's members and board.

Based on the aforementioned analysis, and the findings of the Strategic Planning, the consultant has concluded that the communication strategy must take into consideration all these factors and challenges.

The methodology used for developing this strategy was inclusive of all stakeholders, and it helped identify the strengths and weaknesses on the internal and external levels.

The proposed strategy has identified the following objectives:

- Enhance RANAA's image and visibility;
- Strengthen and improve the quality and quantity of communication within RANAA;  
and
- Create new communication channels and relevant tools to engage constituents and stakeholders.

In line with these objectives, activities were selected in priority order together with the expected outcome and required budget.

## **2. Introduction**

RANAA is a regional Arab network that fights the spread of HIV/AIDS in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

The Network was established in 2002 in Tunis and now comprises national networks of different civil society organizations, associations and people living with HIV in 24 countries of the region. The mission of RANAA is to reduce AIDS expansion and improve the quality of life of the PLHIV in the MENA region, through networking, advocacy and building the technical and organizational capabilities of the civil society at all levels.

Its board of directors consists of 7 members representing the member organizations in RANAA from: Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Sudan, Syria and presided by Lebanon.

A unique network in the MENA region, RANAA has focused in the past on Networking, Advocacy and Capacity Building of its members. To coincide with its tenth anniversary, RANAA is currently reviewing its mission, vision and strategic orientation. Based on the recommendations of the board members at their meeting in May 2012, it was suggested that RANAA takes on a new role focusing on being a Regional Hub, a Member Enabler as well as on Networking & Bridging.

It was also recommended for RANAA to undergo an organizational restructure and develop its strategies, plans and policies: Fundraising strategy, Communication strategy, M&E plan and Policies and Procedures that go hand in hand with RANAA's comprehensive strategic plan for the coming five years.

## **3. Assignment & Methodology**

In order to come up with a comprehensive communication strategy, RANAA engaged the services of a communication consultant (Amal Elias Souleiman) to work as part of a team of professional consultants working on the various strategies and plans.

The assignment of the communication consultant entailed the following deliverables:

- The development of a communication strategy for 5 years
- The development of an action plan for 2013

In implementing the assignment, the consultant adopted a methodology that included performing the following tasks:

- ✓ A desk review to analyze RANAA's current status based on its mission, its history in the wake of the changes that the Arab region is undergoing.
- ✓ Conduct a survey with the board of directors, a number of RANAA members, journalists from more than 10 Arab countries, representatives of funding organizations and partners. The objective was to determine RANAA's current communication capacities, strengths and weaknesses, based on its past and current activities and achievements. *Appendix 1 (survey template)*
- ✓ Interview the secretariat, the president, member organizations, board members, partners and donors.
- ✓ Develop the objectives and priorities/orientations of the Communication strategy based on RANAA's comprehensive strategic plan.
- ✓ Formulate an action plan for the year 2013.

#### **4. Assessment of the current communication status at RANAA**

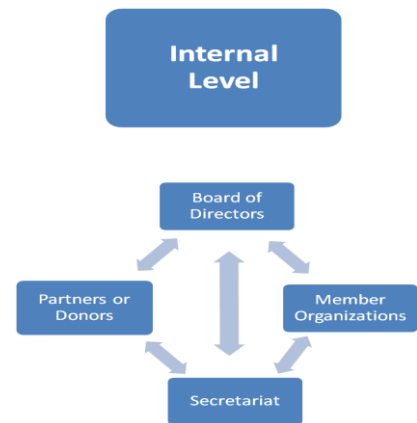
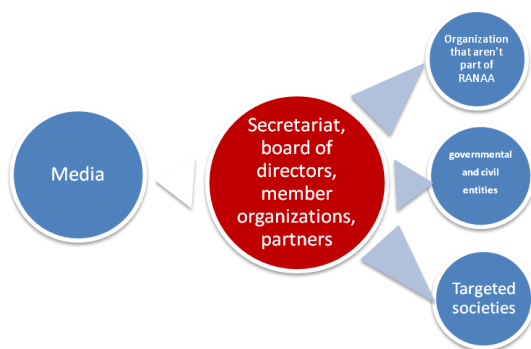
Based on the above adopted methodology, the consultant conducted an assessment of the current communication status at RANAA and came out with the following main aspects:

- a- The absence of incentives to board members and members to encourage them to promote RANAA, and therefore communicate with the Secretariat or with each other as expected.
- b- A missing link of communication between RANAA, its members and their affiliates which makes it hard for the network to promote its activities and reach a wider number of CSOs.
- c- RANAA's focus on implementing its activities rather than communicating with its internal and external stakeholders has weakened its communication effectiveness. This weakness was due, among other reasons, to the shortage of staff in particular a communication officer.
- d- The non existence of a communication strategy.

Furthermore, the strength and weaknesses of RANAA's communication at the internal & external level were identified ( see table below).

#### Main stakeholders at Internal and External levels

##### *External level*



4.1	INTERNAL COMMUNICATION OF RANAA		EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION OF RANAA	
	Strengths	Weaknesses	Strengths	Weaknesses
<b>1. Board Members</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attending regularly held meetings</li> <li>• Moderate communication with the secretariat and among members.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weak sense of engagement of some board members.</li> <li>• Lack of active communication between the board members themselves.</li> <li>• Irregular response to emails.</li> <li>• Absence of Skype meetings and teleconferences.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of incentives to promote RANAA's activities.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Secretariat</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very active and reliable secretariat.</li> <li>• Regular communication and follow up with RANAA members and the board of directors.</li> <li>• Strong sense of commitment and belonging.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication between the secretariat and members is limited to activities implementation.</li> <li>• Absence of a communication strategy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revitalization of RANAA as a respectable network in the region.</li> <li>• Reinforcement of communication between RANAA members through implemented activities.( regional workshops, exchange visits, consensus meetings...)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inability to maintain communication channels with the media.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Members</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizing and Participating in RANAA's regional activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Irregular communication with the secretariat.</li> <li>• Not promoting RANAA in their local events and to their own members.</li> <li>• No sense of belongingness to RANAA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of pride in their membership at RANAA</li> <li>• Lack of effective engagement &amp; interest.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some Members of national networks are not aware of RANAA's existence.</li> </ul>



<b>4. Partners/Donors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular communication and correspondence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The inability to understand the Arab World's traditions and culture which hinders the possibility of communicating on different levels.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Willingness to support RANAA's activities financially</li> </ul>	
<b>5. Visibility</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of promotional materials and annual reports.</li> <li>• No visibility of RANAA on members websites (Logo, activities..)</li> <li>• No visibility of member's activities on RANAA's website.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting RANAA's image at regional and international events by the president and the secretariat.</li> <li>• The presence of a redesigned website.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of visibility of RANAA's activities in the media on the part of the Secretariat, members and board members.</li> <li>• Lack of usage of the social media by the secretariat, members and board members. (Twitter, you tube, Skype, RANAA has an inactive current Facebook page that does not exceed 6000 visitors..)</li> <li>• Outdated information on the website.</li> <li>• No presence of promotional materials (fact sheets, banners, brochure, Business cards for board members, pins...)</li> <li>• Irregular publication of an e-newsletter.</li> <li>• Visibility is limited to only RANAA's activities (no social activities).</li> <li>• The website is only in one language ( English).</li> </ul>
<b>6. Human Resources At RANAA</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A shortage of staff, currently two staff members at the secretariat.</li> <li>• Absence of a communication officer</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The absence of a spokesperson whose name and appearances can be linked to RANAA.</li> </ul>

## 4.2 Communication & promotional materials

The consultant conducted an assessment of the existing communication material that has been used by RANAA. The results are in the below table.

*It is worthy to mention that RANAA is currently revising its Vision and Mission and strategic orientations to be approved at its upcoming General Assembly ( Dec 2012).*

Item	Existing	Needs updating	Needs development
Website	✓	Needs continuous feeding & updating	
Brochure	✓	Update & print with new Mission and Vision & strategic orientations/ after GA	
Roll Up banner	✓		✓
Flyers	✓	✓	X
Folders	✓	Design ready, Needs printing	X
Business cards	✓	Design ready, Needs printing	Need to be sent to Board members
Letter Head	✓	Design ready, Needs printing	X
Annual report	✓	In CD format 2010/2011 Need to be developed in hard copies	2012
News letter	X		✓
Factsheet	✓	Regular updating and printing	X
Flag	✓	Need to develop 6 more be sent to board members	X
Pins	X		✓
Bookmarks	✓	Awaiting GA	X
Poster	X		✓
Promotional movies	X		✓

### 4.3 Conclusion

The strategic plan assessment revealed that RANAA's comparative advantage is its uniqueness in the region. It was also identified as being as "narrow and specific" when it comes to its target audience and its scope of activities.

RANAA's main target audiences are the national networks of civil society organizations working on HIV/AIDS. However, in order for the communication plan to be effective there is a need to engage, in parallel to the main targets, other actors such as: Media, religious leaders, government bodies, educational institutions...

The assessment showed that RANAA's image is distorted in the region and that the flow of internal and external communication is not up to the required level. In addition, the available communication tools are inadequate and require upgrading. Furthermore, there is neither a specific person who has been assigned to be RANAA's spokesperson at the board nor a communication officer who has been recruited as a staff member. The communication function despite its strategic importance has been the responsibility of several persons and the priority of none.

In conclusion, the flaw in communication has weakened the Network's position as an active regional network, not to mention the issue of discrimination and stigmatization that prevails in the MENA region.

## 5- Proposed Strategy

### 5.1 Description

Taking into consideration the findings of the assessment and survey with all the concerned parties, coupled with the emerging political, financial and social situation in the region, RANAA's communication strategy needs to be comprehensive, relevant, multi dimensional and aggressive. It also needs to capitalize on lessons learnt from previous activities and address and prioritize the main issues facing it in the coming years.

### 5.2 Objectives

*In line with RANAA's Working Mission: "RANAA works to strengthen the role of the civil society in: limiting the spread of HIV/AIDS in the MENA region, including those working with most at risk populations (MARPs), and ensuring the rights of PLHIV to live in dignity and have access to treatment & care, through enabling its members and providing them technical support, acting as a regional hub for and on civil society that works on HIV/AIDS and assuring their representation through networking at the regional and international levels."*

And in line with its newly developed 5 years strategic plan, the proposed communication strategy is geared to reinforce RANAA's visibility, credibility and reliability as a source of information on CSO & HIV/AIDS.

It is important in this regard to develop a communication strategy that is specific, measurable, achievable and realistic with the goal of **raising awareness** of the target audience and engaging their interest. This will eventually create a sense of ownership and get them to promote RANAA's mission.

In order to improve its communication effectiveness at all levels with the aim at becoming a regional hub (to fulfill the strategic goal of RANAA strategic plan) , RANAA has to achieve the following objectives:

- **Enhance its image and visibility**
- **Strengthen and improve the quality and quantity of communication within RANAA**
- **create new communication channels and relevant tools to engage constituents and stakeholders**

The proposed communication strategy is spread over 5 years, bearing in mind that the first year is the most important, as it will be the foundation of the work plan.

The main slogan of the proposed strategy will be “ **From proximity to horizon** “

### 5.3: Activities and Indicators

Objective 1: Enhance RANAA's image and visibility	
Actions	Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop specific branding guidelines for RANAA (logo, slogan, letterhead).</li> <li>• Put members' webpage link on RANAA's website.</li> <li>• Sharing new stories and announcements, in addition to posting them on the website.</li> <li>• Regular updating of the website &amp; photo gallery.</li> <li>• Shared stories/articles and experiences from members organizations &amp; Board members on RANAA's website.</li> <li>• Include RANAA logo on members' social media with a link to RANAA website.</li> <li>• Monitoring activities on Facebook and Social media.</li> <li>• Develop a calendar for Media interviews</li> <li>• Exchange of promotional materials at events (annual reports, brochures, DVD...)</li> <li>• Sending annual reports to all stakeholders (government bodies, Religious leaders...).</li> <li>• RANAA to engage in events and activities of relevant ministries through the national networks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well developed branding guidelines</li> <li>• An up-to-date website</li> <li>• More visitors to website and Social media.</li> <li>• Number of new posted stories</li> <li>• Feedback from participants</li> <li>• Mini-library (&amp;/or e-library) of printed and non printed materials of RANAA members.</li> <li>• The number of appearance in the Media</li> <li>• <b>Number of annual reports received by stakeholders and feedback received from them</b></li> <li>• Number of events</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting RANAA through capacity building workshops to non members.</li> <li>• Regularly interact with the Media.</li> <li>• Secretariat to hold every other year a social event for regional media key People, main stakeholders, sponsors donors...).</li> <li>• Liaise with fundraising activities in promoting Asmaa' movie.</li> <li>• Obtain corporate sponsorship for annual campaigns – liaise with fundraising activities. This applies for RANAA and its national networks.</li> <li>• Allocate a forum space on RANAA website.</li> <li>• Use the IAD International day of AIDS, to organize regional event in collaboration with members &amp; promote RANAA's image and activities.</li> <li>• Nominate an “ambassador” to represent RANAA in events (Public figure from the Arab region).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• new members</li> <li>• Social events organized</li> <li>• A tour of “Asmaa” movie</li> <li>• Number of sponsors</li> <li>• More interaction on the website</li> </ul>
<b>Objective 2: Strengthen and improve the quality and quantity of communication within RANAA</b>	
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appoint a communication officer <i>Appendix 2, Job description</i></li> <li>• Build professional staff capacity at the secretariat</li> <li>• Create a habit of regular communication with Board members (emails, teleconference, Skype whatsapp..).</li> <li>• Provide the Board members with RANAA's promotional material &amp;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication officer recruited and operating</li> <li>• Increase in the number of responses.</li> <li>• More engagement of the Board members.</li> <li>• A sense of commitment and belonging.</li> </ul>

<p>documentations ( roll up banner, brochure, bookmarks, Flag, reports..)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish regular communication pattern with the members through periodical e-newsletter.</li> <li>• Update board members on RANAA's activity on a monthly basis.</li> <li>• Develop a comprehensive Database (Academic, religious leaders, relevant Government bodies and media Key people..)</li> <li>• Develop a comprehensive list of members of National networks.</li> <li>• Create "Member of the Year " award.</li> <li>• Members to nominate a communication rep to liaise with RANAA communication officer.</li> <li>• Develop the capacities of members in terms of communication &amp; new technologies (conference, workshops..).</li> <li>• Maintain regular communication with partners.</li> <li>• Develop information Pack to be available for distribution during events by RANAA secretariat and members. (annual report, brochure, fact sheet, DVD, bookmark...).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved communication with the members</li> <li>• Well developed Database for stakeholders and members</li> <li>• Selection of "Member of the Year" award.</li> <li>• Member of the Year.</li> <li>• List of communication reps from RANAA members.</li> <li>• Well established correspondence between the secretariat and Partners</li> <li>• The information pack</li> </ul>
---	--



**Objective 3 : create new communication channels and relevant tools to engage constituents and stakeholders**

Actions	Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Post the Bio of each board member on RANAA website</li><li>• Develop business cards for RANAA board members.</li><li>• Keep up-to-date with newly developed communication technologies.</li><li>• Ensure to be on the mailing list of regional universities to include RANAA in their activities.</li><li>• More use of high-tech communication means (webinars...).</li><li>• Organize an orientation/introduction and consensus meeting with potential regional partners (ILO, WHO, UNAIDS, Alliance, UNICEF...).</li><li>• Invite Donors to regional conferences.</li><li>• Allocate a special donors/sponsors/Media (whenever applicable) recognition page on the annual report</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A sense of commitment and belonging.</li><li>• To be set to coincide well before the launch of the donors financial year</li><li>• Increase number of interested parties in RANAA's activities</li></ul>



## **5.4 Priorities & Pre-requisites (HR & Financial)\**

In order to ensure the successful implementation of the strategy, certain pre-requisites have to be arranged. These pre-requisites are centered on two main areas: Human and Financial resources.

The existence of qualified and committed human resources is instrumental to championing the transformation process at RANAA that this strategy is proposing.

The recruitment of the communication officer is crucial to launch the recommended activities and will signal an important message to RANAA's stakeholders.

Furthermore, without the availability of needed financial resources, RANAA will not be able to implement most of the proposed activities/initiatives. Therefore, RANAA has to include in its Strategic Plan these pre-requisites and should discuss them with its strategic partners.

## 6. Action Plan 2013

Activity	Expected outcome	Budget	Timeline
Appoint Communication Officer.	Implementing the communication strategy and coordinate the activities. (refer to Annex , Job description)	\$30.000	January
Create a comprehensive database/e-directory	List of national networks, affiliates and CSO, media, government bodies ...	Maintenance 700\$/year	Janurary-February
Update existing communication & promotioanl material	Updated website & facebook page, you tube, re-launch of the newsletter, promotional materials (flag, pins, banners, flyers, brochures ...), Annual reports...  For monitoring Social media, hire a part time staff member* ( optional, starting mid 2013)	Maintenance Website 700\$/year  Communication Materials 5000\$ Printing Annual report 4000\$ 700\$/Month	All year around
Develop branding guidelines for RANAA	Members' implementation of the branding guidelines in their own	1500\$	April

	activities. Sense of ownership.		
Establish partnership with the media in the MENA region	More visibility of RANAA	6000\$ (business lunch- dinners.. with Media people	Starting april onward
Maintain effective communication with Board members, members, partners	Consolidtion & synchronisation with members & partners		All year round
Members to nominate a communication rep to liaise with RANAA communicaiton officer	Effective communication among the members.		March
A tour of relevant documentaries in three Arab Countries.	Awareness and visibility	\$50.000 for three tours in three countries.	December to coincide with World AID Day

\*a decision has to be made in regards to appointing spokesperson & ambassador in the first year.

