

PARIS  
21

2021-2025  
COMMUNICATIONS  
STRATEGY

ABRIDGED

# WHERE ARE WE TODAY?

The global conversation on data and statistics is busy, and becoming busier. New actors from many different sectors are emerging and clamouring to be heard, platforms and partnerships are proliferating, and the global political environment is rapidly evolving.

Within this context, PARIS21 will have to fight harder to be heard and demonstrate an ability to respond to the changing world, while at the same time remaining true to our mandate.

PARIS21 has a number of advantages in our favour. Whereas most of our peer organisations have only been around for less than a decade, we were founded in 1999. During the intervening decades, we established an excellent reputation as a trusted partner of NSOs and others in low- and middle-income countries. What is more, by remaining small and agile, we have managed to avoid the inertia that plagues some organisations more than a few decades old.

PARIS21 is also viewed by our institutional partners (for example our founding members, the IMF, World Bank, OECD, UN and European Commission) as occupying an essential part of the development statistics space. Our close link to developing countries, technical expertise built on decades of practical experience, and ability to bring a wide range of stakeholders to the table, are an important value-added for our partners.

PARIS21 occupies a unique position as simultaneously an insider (in the sense that we are steeped in the history and evolution of the development statistics space, including its technical aspects) and an outsider (we are not viewed as fighting any specific corner, compared to other partners who tend to be viewed as allied to one specific viewpoint or position). This gives us a unique authority and convening power in many discussions.

PARIS21 is considered by many as the preeminent advocate for the system approach, and an important technical partner for national statistical planning. We have supported statistical planning processes in over a hundred countries and remain a critical resource for countries embarking on a national strategy for the development of statistics (NSDS). This has provided us with important insights into the realities of the ways in which statistical systems are implemented and evolve that provide the intellectual foundation for many of our other areas of work, such as CD4.0 and digitalisation.

On the other hand, the system approach is a difficult topic to sell to donors, partners and the general public. While few would disagree that developing strong, resilient national statistical systems is the right long-term approach, it is difficult to gain buy-in for activities that do not have an immediate return on investment or easily measurable impact. Moreover, exigencies of international reporting requirements, immediate data needs (for example COVID-19 response and recovery) and new and exciting technological advancements often displace the system approach for near-term objectives.

Given our close association with the system approach, we risk being crowded out of discussions on topics such as big data and SDG reporting by other organisations more focused on those issues. Complementary of mission isn't an issue in itself, and can serve to multiply our efforts. However, given the small size of the development data

& statistics space, and the fact that we share donors with a number of our peers, it is incumbent upon PARIS21 to clearly describe our unique value proposition within the new data landscape. This is especially true in the context of observations from key PARIS21 donors and partners that PARIS21 and GPSDD have not done enough to clearly describe our respective niches.

Finally, PARIS21 is reliant largely on a handful of bilateral donors for funding. As our space becomes more competitive, challenges to attract and retain funding will increase. Like many organisations, PARIS21 is facing greater demands from our donors for evidence of our contribution to change. Simultaneously, philanthropic organisations and other types of donors are becoming increasingly important, and opportunities to diversify our funders exist. However, to be successful, close introspection about what we offer, and a more rigorous approach to capturing and communicating results, are needed.

PARIS21's 2021-2025 Strategy considers many of these questions and sets the organisation on a path to successfully fulfil our mandate over the next five years. The associated results framework establishes a rigor of logic to our activities in order to travel the straightest course along this path.

## WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO?

PARIS21 cannot achieve its mandate alone. It relies on the collaboration, buy-in, commitments and good will of a wide range of actors, some of whom, such as foundations and private sector entities, are relatively new to the data for development conversation.

This strategy therefore provides a rationale and framework for strategic, efficient, partner-focused communications during the 2021-2025 period that will bring new entities into the PARIS21 partnership, turn existing partners into champions, and expand our reach and persuasiveness in order to put robust data and statistics at the heart of decision-making for inclusive sustainable development.

Please note that this document presents key excerpts of the full PARIS21 2021-2025 Communications Strategy. The documents that comprise the full strategy are available to PARIS21 Board Members upon request.



### STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES

Bring a **coherent and persuasive impact narrative** to all aspects of PARIS21's work, underpinned by case studies, testimonials, and other evidence, to strengthen PARIS21's strategic positioning, partner engagement and resource mobilization.

Build a **more engaged partnership** through content provision that meets partner needs, reengineering mechanisms for partner engagement, and leveraging the PARIS21 platform to tell partner stories.

Make **partner communications fit for purpose** by institutionalising data communications support as a core PARIS21 competency, providing training, guidance and support to national statistical system partners to modernize their communications.

# METHODOLOGY

Between August and December 2020, a methodical and wide-ranging analysis of PARIS21’s strategic context, stakeholders and channels was undertaken. This provided us with a comprehensive understanding of how we are perceived, what our opportunities and threats are, and how we are performing across a wide range of indicators. The findings, amounting to hundreds of pages, were further distilled, compartmentalised and explored in order to arrive at twenty strategic recommendations. The model for our analysis is as follows:

	Benchmarking	Stakeholder Analysis	Channel Analysis
What we wanted to understand	<p>The environment in which PARIS21 works today</p> <p>How we communicate compared with our peers</p>	<p>Why our stakeholders engage with us and how they perceive us</p> <p>Who our subscribers, followers, fans, readers, and participants are and why</p>	<p>How well we’re communicating across various channels (web, social, publications, etc)</p> <p>How this changes over time</p> <p>How well our tools and platforms serve their purpose</p>
What we analysed	<p>Global trends, agreements and partnerships from the data &amp; statistics world</p> <p>Current and historical PARIS21 strategic and financial documents</p> <p>Public communications channels of PARIS21 and our peer organisations for the year 2020</p>	<p>One-to-one conversations with more than a third of our Board Members</p> <p>A survey of more than 5000 working-level partners</p> <p>PARIS21 social media and web channels using behavioural and demographic analysis tools</p>	<p>The PARIS21 website and social media channels using standard KPIs for 2019-2020</p> <p>Data on PARIS21 publications (readership, engagement)</p> <p>PARIS21 internal communications processes and tools</p>

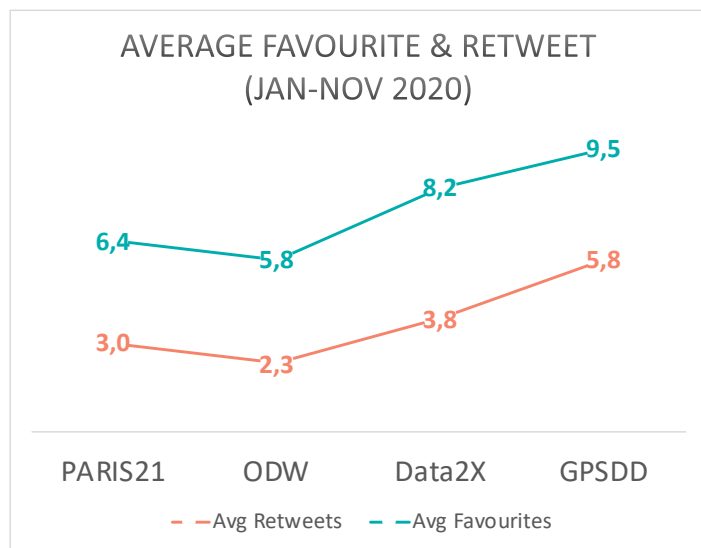
For the purposes of this strategy, stakeholder analysis focused on three main tiers, with different levels of analysis given to each.

**Tier 1 - Strong impact on PARIS21 in terms of governance, financing and/or reputation:** PARIS21 Board Members were interviewed individually during 30-minute bilateral interviews in order to gain deeper insights into their engagement with PARIS21, strengthen our relationship, and develop communications solutions to meet their needs and interests.

**Tier 2 - strong impact on PARIS21 in terms of delivery of PARIS21’s POW:** A survey was sent to the PARIS21 stakeholder email list, which largely comprises working-level partners.

**Tier 3 - low impact on PARIS21:** Analysis of PARIS21’s social media channels and web audiences. These channels are dominated by ‘other’ individuals (members of the public or entities with whom PARIS21 does not directly work). Demographic and behavioural analysis using online tools were performed for this category.

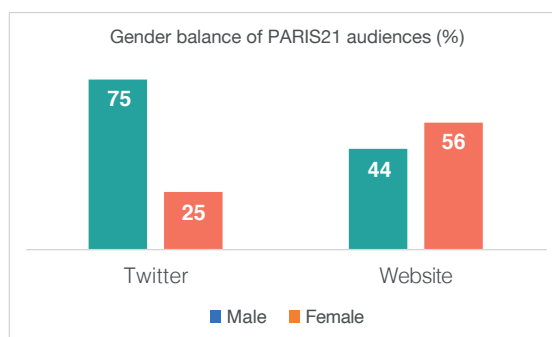
# SELECTED FINDINGS



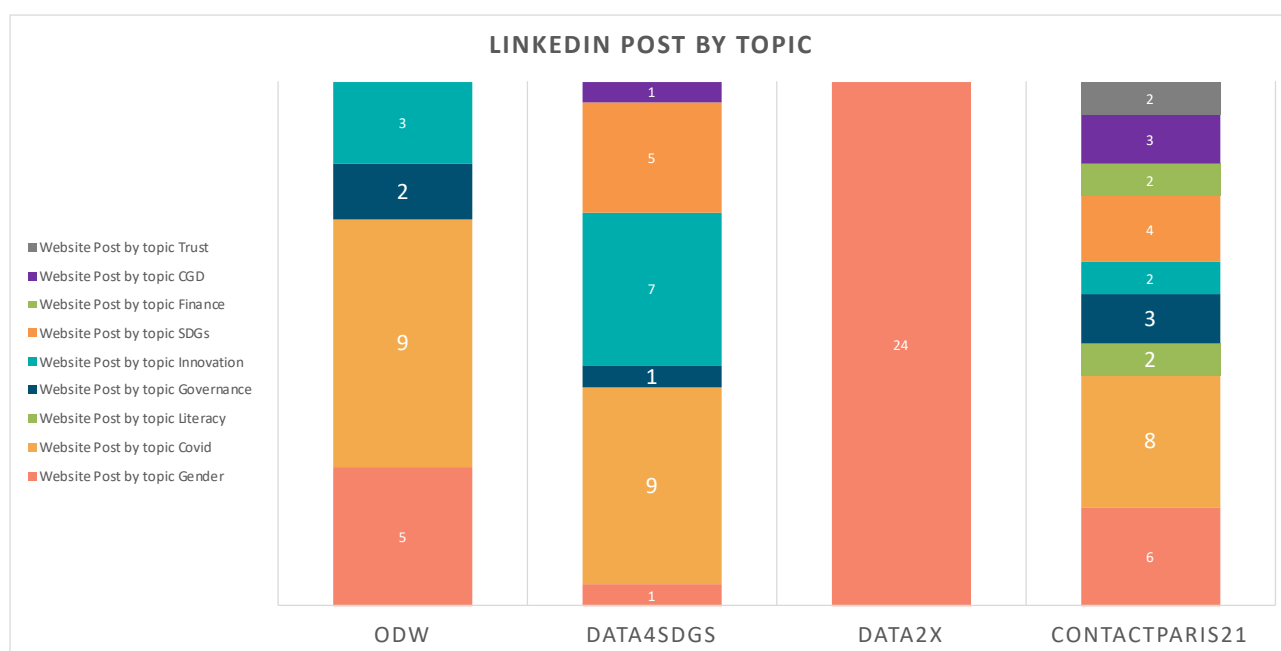
Over the past year, PARIS21 grew its Twitter following from 2,600 followers to more than 22,000. PARIS21 has the lowest volume of tweets, favourites and retweets compared to our peers, with less than half the volume of all compared to GPSDD, which has the most. PARIS21's average performance is somewhat better, however.

## 12,686

PDFs were downloaded from PARIS21.org 12,686 times during 2020. The most-downloaded publication was PRESS2020 (450 downloads), followed by the Gender Framework (320), Governance Handbook (246), CD4.0 Pamphlet (224), CD4.0 Guidelines (200), and the PARIS21 2021-2025 Strategy (159)



PARIS21's Twitter followers are mostly male, whereas women provide most website traffic. PARIS21 also follows more male Twitter accounts.



**Share of Voice:** GPSDD and ODW dominate in terms of advocacy news and opinion, On the other hand, PARIS21 dominates on the topics of trust in data and financing of more and better data.

# BOARD INTERVIEWS: FIVE KEY INSIGHTS

1. Board Members who are best informed about PARIS21 are those who were involved in its creation and remain partners to this day. These tend to be IGO officials, who stay in their positions for longer. Donor focal points, on the other hand, tend to be less informed about PARIS21 (though their institution may have a longstanding relationship). This is due to the fact that they tend not to be from within the data sector and rotate around in their posts more frequently.
2. Many partners see PARIS21's greatest value as a convener of diverse stakeholders, with particular expertise on the developing country context at the technical level. PARIS21's NSO partners particularly value PARIS21 as being the only organisation focused on system strengthening. The two are not mutually exclusive, and by clarifying where PARIS21 brings the greatest value as a convener (i.e. at the data ecosystem or national statistical system level), PARIS21 can serve the interests of both communities.
3. Some Board Members cite our inability to distinguish ourselves from GPSDD as being a significant risk. Other Board Members note that turning away from foundation system support in favour of big data and other themes is a risk. Others still note the importance of positioning PARIS21 as an entity rather than a partnership as threatening our unique selling point.
4. A majority of Board Members cite a strong demand for PARIS21 communications support to national statistical offices in terms of strategy, social media, tactics, data visualisation and media engagement. Donors and IGO partners cite strong PARIS21 communications as making it well-placed to deliver this support.
5. Most Board Members highly value PARIS21 communications. However, a significant number suggested that the organisation diversify the presentation of PARIS21 knowledge products. For example, by releasing not only a 100-page report, but also a one-page factsheet about it, some infographic, and a short brief. Board Members also cited the lack of translated material and regional presence as being a barrier to engagement.





# THE WAY FORWARD

Based on the analysis undertaken during Q3 & Q4 of 2020, we arrived at a set of twenty strategic recommendations as well as nearly fifty quick wins and medium-term activities. These were then operationalised into three key workstreams, designed to deliver the three overarching communications objectives of this strategy.

These workstreams span a five-year period to coincide with the PARIS21 2021-2025 Strategy Period. This is important, as many activities build on one another over a long period of time, and some require substantial internal operational and cultural shifts, which take time. Cultivating new partnerships and strengthening engagement with existing stakeholders not a short-term activity either. As such, KPIs are designed to build on successes of the previous year, in order to yield transformative change over the whole period.

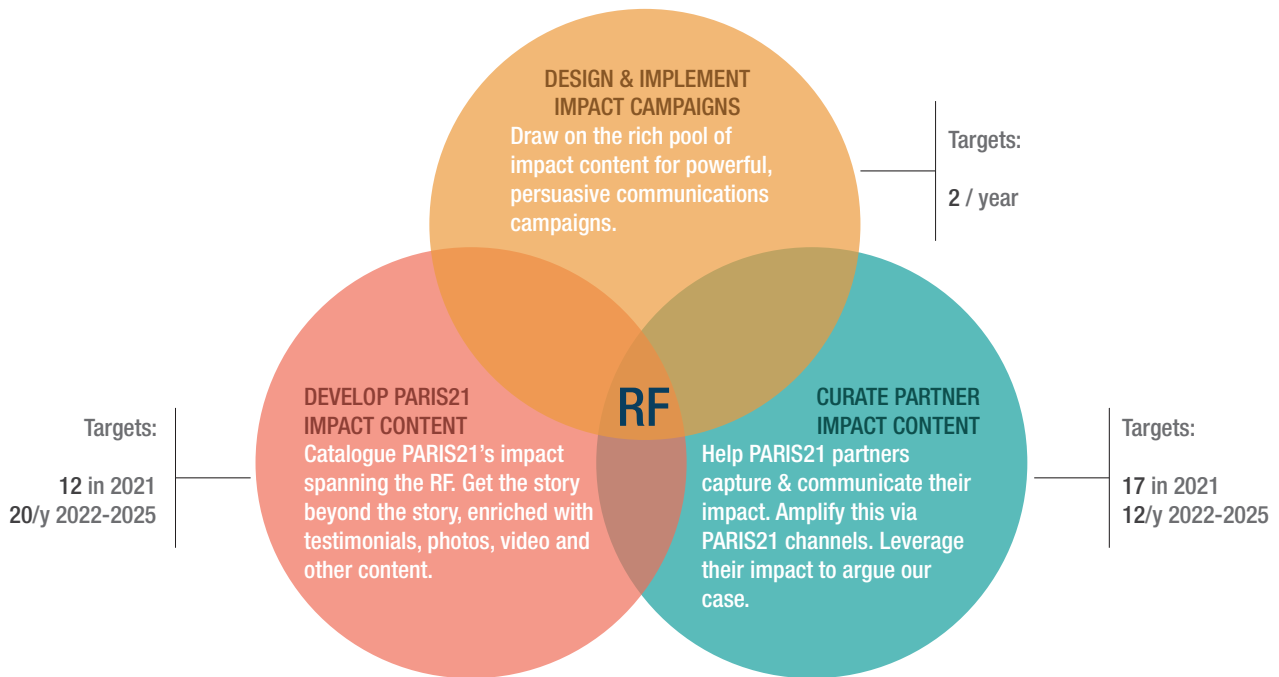
For the purposes of near-term planning, prioritisation and goal setting, these workstreams, as well as the quick wins and medium-term activities, have been operationalised into a detailed workplan for the first year, together with monthly, quarterly and annual targets. Subsequent years will undergo a similar process as we progress through the years of the strategy.

Aside from the new workstreams, excellence in the day-to-day communications of PARIS21 must be ensured. This includes providing strategic communications guidance, ensuring that PARIS21 publications and content are to a high standard, overseeing branding and corporate alignment, and a range of ongoing support (proofreading, design, branding, web conferencing, printing, events, and so on).

To manage the existing workload of the communications and partnership team, while introducing a significant number of new activities and workstreams requires a range of drivers of success (described in the full communications strategy) and implicates the team in rigorous planning and reporting, effective time management, an open and effective working culture and continuous feedback in multiple directions. A range of new planning, review, monitoring and reporting processes, aligned with the PARIS21 Results Framework, are therefore described.



# MAINSTREAMING IMPACT WORKSTREAM



PARIS21 is a trusted partner of NSOs the world over, a linchpin of the international statistical community, and an organization that has countless successful interventions under its belt. This is fertile ground for developing a rich pool of content that describes our impact and that of our partners.

Leveraging this content will aid our reporting for the results framework, facilitate donor engagement, and strengthen our communications. Capturing this impact and turning it into persuasive content pieces is a systematic, long-term effort that requires us to dig beyond the surface of our interventions and draw out, through anecdotes, interviews, photos and video, stories that show how, in concrete ways, they contribute to better lives for people.

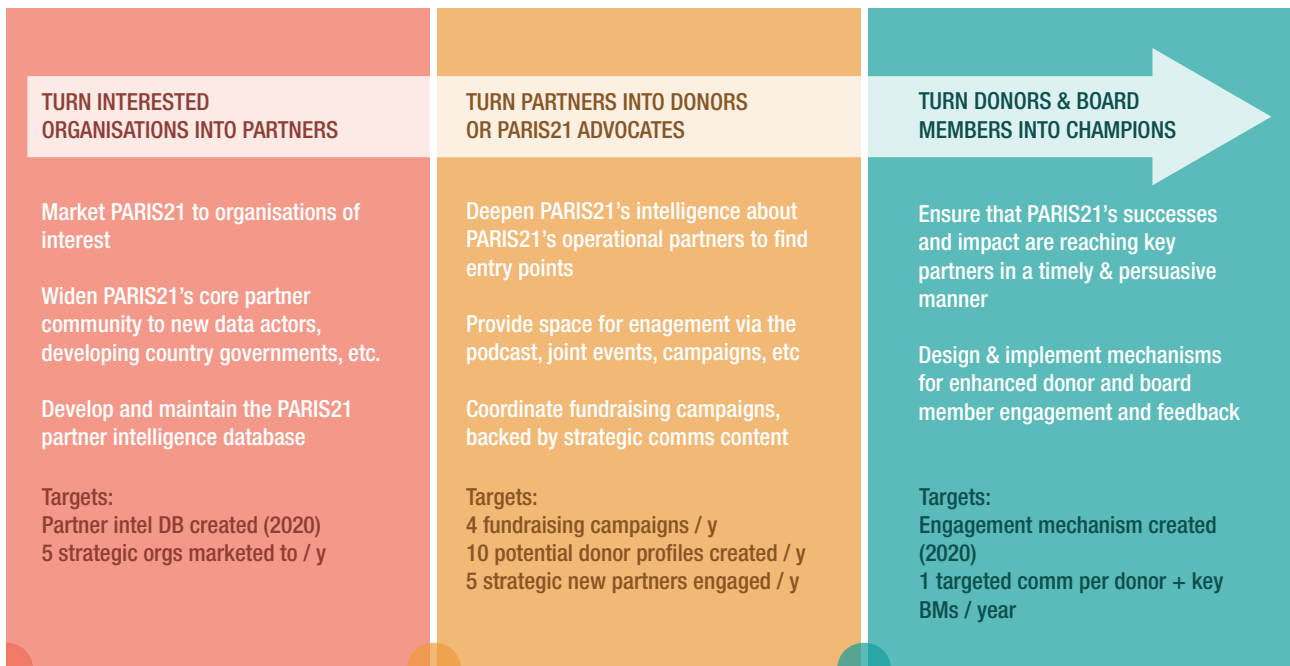
By linking our impact collection to results framework reporting, we kill two birds with one stone. On the one hand, we gather the evidence to know whether we are delivering our mandate. On the other, we establish the basis for convincing partners to join us, central in itself to our mission.

Beginning in 2021, we will systematically seek to understand, record, measure and communicate the evidence, anecdotes, and stories of how data and statistics, are leading to better lives. We will provide new space via PARIS21 platforms and channels for partners to tell their success stories, and we will leverage our partnership to build the case that better data leads to better lives.

Becoming more impact-oriented is an organisation-wide priority. PARIS21 programmatic staff will be empowered, and called on, to scale-up impact content production via training, guidance and support and by including KPIs on impact content into performance mechanisms.



# STRENGTHENING PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WORKSTREAM



The next five years present PARIS21 with a tremendous opportunity to update and expand our corps of partners in line with our strategic objectives. Just as we update the ways in which we work to achieve our mandate in line with the evolution of our sector, so should we revisit our partner base. The growing importance of new data actors (social media companies, telecommunications providers, and civil society, to name a few) and the shifting geopolitical landscape make it imperative that we have the right mix of partners.

We will seek to identify and attract new partners based on a structured approach to partner intelligence and a concerted effort to communicate the best of what PARIS21 has to offer in line with their interests. By matching communications efforts with opportunities for substantive engagement, we will engage new partners as intellectual equals on topics of mutual benefit and provide the necessary hook to deepen the conversation.

We will also strengthen efforts to engage our core supporters (donors, exco members and others) and enhance their willingness and ability to champion PARIS21. The baseline for this is timely, high quality reporting. But our ability to turn those core supporters into tireless advocates for PARIS21 will come from ensuring that they are convinced of our unique value proposition, fully informed about our latest achievements and impact, and feel that they get value for money out of our partnership.

Strengthening partner engagement is an ongoing process requiring both reactivity to partner interest and needs, and long-term cultivation of relationships over a number of years. A more strategic approach to partner engagement will be supported by building staff competencies, process engineering and systematization. Concerted efforts will therefore be made to develop internal processes, implement databases and intelligence, build the skills of staff to engage partners and introduce forms and templates as necessary.

# FIT 4 PURPOSE DATA COMMS WORKSTREAM

		TARGETS				
		2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
<b>COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT</b>	Using the PARIS21 communications strategy framework, train & guide communications staff to develop a strategy (including through strategy development workshop), and provide ongoing coaching during strategy implementation. • Funded by PARIS21 & Sida (2021)	1 NSO	1 NSO 1 PARTNER	2 NSOs 1 PARTNER	2 NSOs 1 PARTNER	2 NSOs
<b>TOPICAL DATA COMMUNICATIONS LEARNING PROGRAMME</b>	Bring NSO officials, governments and journalists together in a peer-learning modality, to co-create a communications product. Includes face-to-face learning (eg. bootcamps) with e-learning (Academy) on themes such as gender, COVID-19, or climate. • Funded by PARIS21, bring in other partners depending on theme	TBC	x COUNTRIES	x COUNTRIES	x COUNTRIES	x COUNTRIES
<b>MINI-WORKSHOPS &amp; TRAINING PACKAGES</b>	Hold skills-building workshops & provide training materials (incl Adapt, DataViz, etc) throughout the year focusing on strengthening various communications skills (social media, storytelling, crisis communications, etc) for the data community. • Funded by PARIS21, bring in other partners depending on theme	3 WEBINARS 2 RESOURCES	3 WEBINARS 2 PEER-LEARN 2 RESOURCES	3 WEBINARS 2 PEER-LEARN 2 RESOURCES	3 WEBINARS 2 PEER-LEARN 1 RESOURCE	3 WEBINARS 1 RESOURCE
<b>COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE</b>	Mobilize community of practice to generate impact stories, amplify the reach of PARIS21 content and develop PARIS21 partnerships. From Y2, use the community of practice to conduct peer-learning workshops	BUILD COP	INTRODUCE PEER-LEARNING FROM Y1	SCALE PEER-LEARNING FROM Y2	SCALE PEER-LEARNING FROM Y3	TELL SUCCESS STORIES & LESSONS LEARNED

During stakeholder consultations, many of our country and institutional partners in low- and middle-income countries expressed a strong desire for communications support from PARIS21.

Supporting fit-for-purpose communications among partner countries (NSOs in LMICs and the like) will be established as a key workstream over a five-year period. This will enable us to provide long-term support to countries, create the global networks necessary to share good practices and support peer learning and be more strategic in terms of how we provide communications support and to whom.

For partner countries who are institutionally ready, comprehensive communications strategy development support will be given, from ideation to implementation. Support will be modular, so that some elements can be integrated into NSDS or other planning documents, or focus on specific aspects only (such as benchmarking or building capacity in specific areas such as media engagement). The NSDS guidelines will also be updated to include a focus on communications & stakeholder engagement.

For countries plagued by mistrust in data or hampered by ineffective data communications on topics such as COVID-19, gender or climate change, data communications learning programmes will work to strengthen collaboration among journalists, NSOs and governments while building topical communications skills while drawing on PARIS21's rich pool of existing resources (gender learning course, PARIS21 Academy, data viz, etc.) Finally, mini-workshops and training resources, delivered in conjunction with expert partners (social media companies, journalists, bloggers, development partners and others), and drawing on existing PARIS21 tools & platforms (Academy, DataViz) will strengthen partner capacity in specific areas.

Underpinning all data communications activities will be the establishment, ongoing cultivation and animation of a community of practice (COP). Aside from peer learning, PARIS21 will use the COP to generate impact content, amplify the reach of PARIS21 communications, and strengthen partnerships.

# EXCELLENCE IN PARIS21 COMMUNICATIONS

The quick wins and three major campaigns that we have just described refer in large part to new activities. They will be delivered on top of already planned campaigns and activities (such as the 2021 Annual Meeting) and the other day-to-day activities of the communications and partnerships team.

This includes ensuring excellence of PARIS21 communications across all units. Activities that fall within this area include providing strategic communications guidance, ensuring that PARIS21 publications and content are to a high standard, overseeing branding and corporate alignment, and a range of ongoing support (proofreading, design, branding, web conferencing, printing, events, and so on).

To manage the existing workload of the communications and partnership team, while introducing a significant number of new activities and workstreams requires a range of drivers of success (as described earlier in this document) but will also implicate the team in rigorous planning and reporting, effective time management, an open and effective working culture and continuous 360 degree feedback.

In addition, a number of drivers of success have been identified which, taken together, will be critical to the success of this communications strategy.

**A stronger PARIS21 communications team:** None of PARIS21's day-to-day or existing activities or campaigns are included in this document: all of the recommendations and activities are new. Existing capacity could absorb most of the quick wins or medium-term activities (with greater use of consultants). However, the three work streams will require additional staff capacity to implement.

**Making communications an organisation-wide priority:** PARIS21 staff all have an important role to play in content generation, intelligence gathering and partner engagement. Impact storytelling in particular relies on those who are closest to the interventions to generate content. Thus, greater responsibility for content generation should fall to PARIS21 staff across all teams.

**Be data-driven:** By making PARIS21 communications more data-driven, through systematically implementing tracking and measurement systems across all channels, we can ensure that our communications decisions are informed by facts.

**Better understand PARIS21's stakeholders:** PARIS21's stakeholder groups should continue to be mapped, segmented, and heard from. Our communications should be as responsive as possible to individual stakeholder group needs and interests.

**Make a long-term effort:** Although a number of quick and medium-win solutions are identified, effort is required over the span of the 2021-2025 strategy in order to implement this strategy effectively. This may include new ways of working across various departments, learning new tools and platforms, and adapting to changing circumstances.

@ContactPARIS21  
secretariat@paris21.org  
linkedin.com/company/paris21  
www.paris21.org

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