Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

In January 2015, the AU Strategic Communication Practicum team paired with WAVE met with grant administrators for the WAVE project to discuss what WAVE Administrators hoped the Practicum team might accomplish. After the initial meeting, the Administrators sent seven issue items they hoped could be addressed by the Practicum in the ensuing four months. They are as follows:

1. Revenue generation strategy for Wave
2. Regional and international donor outreach plan for WAVE fundraising conference in Qatar
3. Portal review and social media strategic communication plan
4. Elevator pitch for WAVE and training of WAVE Board members on networking and public speaking
5. Honorary WAVE Board members strategy and proposed names, including draft letters for each
6. Engagement of a younger generation in WAVE: Strategy and proposed event/s for funding
7. Engagement of WAVE as the region’s representative for women in ICT: how do we introduce them as such, how do we ensure they get invited to events, and how to establish expertise in subject matter
All of these issues focus on increasing WAVE sustainability. The Practicum Team coalesced those seven tasks into the following distinct tracks:

1. Funding
2. Engagement
3. Public Relations
4. Website and Social Media

These four clearly-defined tracks allowed each of the three team members to develop distinct, individual deliverables for which that member was the professional expect and the lead. All Team members contributed to funding as it was the first priority in self-sufficiency and sustainability.

METHODS

Funding sources: Futures Group identified funding as one of its top priorities. The decision to split corporate and development donors was made to alleviate the work load on one person, as well as to leverage team members' unique skill sets. The grant template was used to try to capture the logic behind WAVE in terms of theory of change, and with a clear structure of goals and objectives. This slight rephrasing is meant to make the project more attractive to contemporary donors, by communicating its virtues in a contemporary manner.

Engagement: Futures Group identified a need for engagement of women and young people in its initial deliverables. This track grew out of that concern, as well as the idea that WAVE should reflect its value of multistakeholderism--with many, fully engaged groups--within itself as fully as possible. Additionally, WAVE's health as an organization, and ability to raise funds, depends on a strong core of member organizations.

Public Relations: Clearly established during AU-WAVE's initial meeting, the Public Relations (PR) track was to prepare and equip non-native English-speaking WAVE members to communicate and network with the international audience and stakeholders. Accordingly, training materials and PR packets have been designed to address the most conspicuous and pressing topics of public speaking and presentation and diverse social media initiatives--ultimately to prep members to embrace and recognize they themselves must be ambassadors and supporters in strengthening the WAVE's brand.

Website: One of the crucial initial requests from the WAVE Administrators, the website necessitated edits that served two audiences; the new international donor community which WAVE was to begin to target for funding, and the original WAVE Portal-user audience. While edits were made primarily for the international donor audience, all recommendations were made
with consideration of maintaining the trust WAVE has built with its primary user audience, whom are already accustomed to the portal, and app interface. Benchmark websites from western and Middle East/North Africa/Iranian international development organizations were used for visual style and feeling, cultural context, functionality expectations and layout, and textual edits.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Reworked Goals and Objectives: While WAVE's overall goals seem clear, its goals and objectives as stated on the website and in other materials could use tightening. There is currently some redundancy, as well as a mismatch between what's stated and WAVE's activities. Meanwhile, visioning exercises done with the board can help them claim ownership of the program and guide it productively.

Public Relations: In order to improve WAVE's PR work area, it is crucial the alliance continues to invest in virtual and in-person public speaking and presentation training sessions. Additionally, in respect to social media PR and outreach, the network must stay up-to-date with other similar organizations' social media patterns and trends to create and strengthen local, regional, and international networks and ties.

Website and Advisory Council: To build on the level of excellence WAVE has already achieved, WAVE will want to establish an Advisory Council soonest, hopefully to have the inaugural Council invited (at sponsor cost) to the first annual WAVE Donor Conference. Close connections with colleagues in the industry working at the “gold standard” will do more to ensure that WAVE continues to grow and make its contributions to the field more efficient, effective, and vital. To borrow the phrase, ‘iron sharpens iron.’ It is recommended that willing Advisory Council members mentor a WAVE committee, to assist and guide in the committee’s efforts for the year. The establishment of an Advisory Council will positively impact all areas of WAVE, including the website. To further improve the website, it is recommended that the WAVE Board do three things:

1. Hold a workshop on the WAVES Mission, Vision, Values;
2. Contract a web-design firm to assist with graphics and the gallery;
3. Engage a native English speaker to edit text going forward.