

**COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT**

# a medium for innovation in natural resource management

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DRDC  CRDI



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## About the Authors

Wendy Quarry and Ricardo Ramirez both have a long experience with explaining Communication for Development and putting it into practice in different countries of the world. But also, like many of us, they have often been confronted with the difficulty of making the communication process clear to people involved in development initiatives and in donor organizations, but who do not share such a background.

# Foreword

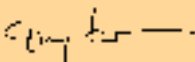
One of the key challenges faced by rural development programmes is to address poverty alleviation, food security and environmental sustainability in an integrated manner. Fighting land degradation and desertification, halting deforestation, promoting proper management of water resources and protecting biodiversity require the active participation of rural communities in communication processes.

For many years, however, communication initiatives in support of environmental and natural resources management have mainly focused on the dissemination and adoption of technical packages. These efforts have met with limited impact.

Communication for Development offers an alternative. Its participatory approaches can facilitate dialogue and exchange of knowledge and information on natural resource management, increase the community knowledge-base (both indigenous and modern), promote agricultural practices which are compatible with the environment, and develop awareness in policy makers, authorities and service providers.

This document presents, through stories and examples, the experience of many people and projects worldwide where communication methods and approaches have been applied to address natural resource management problems.

It is a joint effort between IDRC and FAO to help decision-makers, planners and practitioners understand why and how communication for development activities can support sustainable natural resource management and rural development efforts.



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# A Story from Tanzania<sup>1</sup>

In Tanzania, small landholders living in the tropical semi-arid areas of the country suffer from food shortages and economic losses. This is a result of drought, soil erosion or flooding. Sometimes farmers suffer from both drought and flood in the same season. Up to 70% of the rainwater can be lost to “run-off” that causes flooding and erosion down-stream. Only the smallest fraction remains in the soil long enough to be useful.

## What could be done to alleviate these problems?

Initially, policy makers concentrated on getting the farmers to change to more drought-resistant crops. At the same time, they encouraged farmers to get rid of “run-off” water away from crop and rangelands. This, in areas where agriculture and livelihoods are badly affected by water shortage!

About 12 years ago, the Soil-Water Management Research Group<sup>2</sup> at the Sokoine University of Agriculture started working in collaboration with other researchers to see what could be done to help the farmers sustain their livelihoods.

## How did they approach the problem?

To begin with, the researchers worked in collaboration with local farmers. They learned how local farmers had managed in the past to exploit the natural concentration of runoff in local depressions and valleys. They also collected indigenous knowledge on farmer practice in rainwater harvesting.

That was the platform. Researchers next worked with local knowledge on rainwater harvesting in collaboration with local stakeholders. The aim was to design and implement on-farm experimentation (including participatory GIS work) to develop a sound scientific understanding of farm practice so they could accurately describe the system's benefits. They also communicated with stakeholders through media, seminars, workshops and training courses to improve local knowledge on rainwater harvesting.

The change in perception, policy and strategies towards rainfall runoff has been nothing short of remarkable. There is a real demand for rainwater harvesting technology. Government policy now fully recognizes integrated soil-water management, including rainwater harvesting, as the solution to the drought problems of semi-arid areas.

## How did this change come about?

- ▶ Through action research in full collaboration with local stakeholders;
- ▶ Through sustained communication with stakeholders at all levels informed of the research and findings.

The project has led to a notable change in policy. The President of Tanzania recently outlined the government's four top priorities in Water Management, and rainwater harvesting heads the list.

<sup>1</sup> This extract is based on work by Soil-Water Management Research Group, led by Sokoine University of Agriculture, Tanzania.

<sup>2</sup> Started with a project supported by IDRC from 1991-1994 and with DFID, SUA, NORAD, EU-DG6 and SIDA support from 1992 to date.

## AN OPERATIONAL DEFINITION

Communication is important to support participatory development.

Communication and participation are, in fact, two sides of the same coin.

Communication for development means the **planned** use of different strategies (media and others) to help people become aware of and articulate their **position**, exchange knowledge and skill to take control over their lives, reach consensus and manage conflicts, and improve the effectiveness of organizations.

Communication is about bridging understanding within a human community by exchanging messages to enrich meaning and common knowledge, often with the purpose of embracing change.

# NRM: Natural Resource Management... What's in a Name?

1

This paper is for people engaged in the planning and implementation of Natural Resource Management programs and projects. These are the people who need to find ways to approach natural resource management from a different perspective. In the past, western society emphasized the scientific side of resource management, but today the field is the meeting ground of several different disciplines. People are at the center of the debate as human activity is seen as central to the management of the ecosystem.

With people at the center of natural resource management, communication becomes important. We are talking about the planned communication that must be factored in to facilitate program/project implementation.

If you try doing a search using "Natural Resource Management" through your preferred Internet search engine, chances are you will find a website like NRM-Changelinks at the top of the list - "an on-line resource guide for those seeking to improve the use of collaborative and learning-based approaches." The major issues listed in Natural Resource Management include:

- ▶ Sustainable development and the environment
- ▶ Capacity building (especially social capital)
- ▶ Learning and change
- ▶ Adaptive management
- ▶ Collaborative planning and management
- ▶ Participatory monitoring and evaluation
- ▶ Knowledge and information management
- ▶ Integrated models
- ▶ Conflict management action research
- ▶ Individual growth and change



We are no longer talking about **individual sectors** of forestry, agriculture, or fisheries... These fields have been merged into an approach that is fundamentally different from the past.

We are living a shift...

from the recent focus on specific natural resources – to an acknowledgment that people are part of the ecosystem. This means that now we have to learn to engage many parties in deciding how to manage our relationships with each other, with our policies and with our use of natural resources.

It is clear that...

Natural Resource Management (NRM) has become a common label. Agencies have renamed their former departments of forestry, agriculture, water and irrigation, fisheries and conservation into NRM; they are all now part of the new trend.

What is less clear is...

whether the thinking by the people working in the agencies has changed. Are they ready to embrace collaborative management<sup>3</sup> and other emerging approaches?

<sup>3</sup> Borriini-Feyerabend et al., 2000. *Co-management of natural resources: Organizing, negotiating and learning by doing*. IUCN and GTZ.

## Natural Resource Managers today face unprecedented challenges:

	IN THE PAST	TODAY AND TOMORROW
Assumptions	People could control nature.	Nature is too complex to be controlled, so we aim to manage change – hence the emphasis on collaborative management approaches.
Specialist knowledge	Solutions were developed by specialized experts and passed on to passive users.	We integrate local and external knowledge and expertise – interdisciplinary thinking is a must.
Power balance	Managers used to have the power to impose 'solutions'.	We need to engage many stakeholders and negotiate ways forward – hence the popularity of community participation.
Global and local context	The regional and local context was sufficient for intervention planning.	Global forces have direct impact at all levels (privatization, liberalization, trade agreements, global warming, etc.) – hence the need to engage partners at all levels and to recognize that they all use different 'languages'.
Privatization and liberalization	Governments designed and implemented.	Private-public partnerships and demand-based approaches are the norm – hence the importance of making the rules relevant and applying negotiation skills.
Communication and information tools	Only the elite had access to these tools.	The growing spread of these tools puts pressure on NRM managers to be accountable – hence the importance of harnessing the tools.

This means that NR managers' mindsets are shifting from expecting to control nature, to recognizing that they have no choice but to engage others in negotiation and to make ongoing adaptation a part of NR management.

This shift means moving away from an emphasis on managing physical resources to **understanding human activity as part of the natural resource systems.**



One of the implications of this shift is the emphasis on: participation, consultation, listening, and training. These are tasks where communication excels and provides practical support to NR decision-makers.

In making this shift natural resource management organizations cannot "go at it alone"; they need new policies, new disciplines, new linkages, and new staff expertise.

**The following process skills are needed to facilitate a more people-centered approach.**

- to involve people in decision-making;
- to access people's views;
- to facilitate multi-stakeholder dialogue;
- to build capacity and understanding; and
- to listen to others and share ideas.

**NONE OF THIS CAN TAKE PLACE WITHOUT COMMUNICATION.**

# The Need to Innovate

# 2

*Innovation is fostered by information gathered from new connections; from insight gained by journeys into other disciplines or places; from active, collegial networks and fluid, open boundaries. Innovation arises from ongoing circles of exchange, where information is not just accumulated or stored, but created. Knowledge is generated anew from connections that weren't there before.* (Wheatley, 1992)<sup>4</sup>

Making a shift towards a development philosophy that emphasizes community engagement and collaboration requires new policy frameworks, institutional buy-in in the form of new skills and attitudes by professionals, and a willingness to innovate. The shift in development thinking has been taking place around the world; the accomplishments that are emerging point to some undeniable facts:

- ▶ That change is possible
- ▶ There are neither standard solutions nor blueprints
- ▶ There is a constant need to innovate

The following Mexican experience illustrates the significance of the shift:

**The Plan Chontalpa in the Gulf of Mexico Wetlands** focused on installing drainage and irrigation infrastructure without engaging farmers in the process. Not surprisingly, the farmers never identified with the project and failed to maintain the infrastructure. A rather familiar story.



Through the years of Proderith, these experiences had a profound impact. The Director General of the National Water Commission went on record to announce that the government of Mexico would never again build any infrastructure without first involving the people whom the program is intended and who are required to maintain infrastructure (FAO, 1992).

*Our [communication] costs have remained below 1.5% of the global investment and the benefits we have had during the first phase of the project have demonstrated to us that enhanced project implementation and rapid transfer of technology have contributed to the fact that our internal rate of return has been higher than initially planned. That is 7% higher than initially planned for the project.*

*Fernando González Villarreal, DG,  
National Water Commission, Mexico.*

<sup>4</sup> Wheatley, M.J., 1992. *Leadership and the new science: Learning about organizations for an orderly universe.* Berret-Koehler: San Francisco, p. 113.

When the Program of Integrated Rural Development in the Tropical Wetlands in Mexico (PRODERITH) began, the approach was radically modified to start off with a process of consultation... Video proved to be an excellent tool to bring the farmers into the planning process. During a pre-planning phase a video camera was used to help rural communities analyze their situation, articulate their collective perception and propose solutions. The video-based planning methodology became an integral part of planning in the water sector in Mexico.



The Mexican example has become a popular case study<sup>5</sup>; what is most relevant from that experience is the fact that a large governmental system was able to experiment with new approaches. In essence, they innovated and created a precedent.

Development managers today struggle with how to make the shift in their own contexts; there are no blueprints but many common themes.

Managers do not always initiate change on their own; outside pressure is often the trigger for innovation. In the Mexican example, it was failure in programme implementation that stimulated change. In other cases, external threats have been a powerful trigger to propel change and innovation.

In a DFID study that started in 1993, it became clear that natural resource scientists only began paying attention to communication when the very existence of their programmes became dependent on being able to show impact in the field.



The realization that people must be involved in program decision-making is beginning to be shared across donor agencies. A recent World Bank published handbook for Poverty Reduction Strategic Plans (PRSP) included a chapter on Strategic Communication Planning. This came about through donor consultation around the PRSP process. The working group for PRSP challenged the Bank by asking how it would be possible for countries to build internal ownership process without communicating among citizens.

A group of parliamentarians from Uganda also noted the lack of communication in the PRSP. They alerted the Bank to the fact that the PRSP process was leaving important citizens out of the loop. This prompted the Bank to broaden the PRSP process to facilitate dialogue with all groups (with a special emphasis on parliamentarians).

Participation, the keystone of PRSPs, relies on accurate, consistent and continuous communication that provokes response and encourages debate. Any communication intervention – whether it is a radio program with a phone-in component or a debate with members of the press – should inspire the audience to engage in dialogue. Dialogue invariably leads to better understanding, the application of issues to one's own circumstances and participation in all phases of PRSP.

*Strategic Communication in PRSP, The World Bank*

Major changes, like global warming or the HIV/AIDS epidemic, are additional factors leading to increased attention on communication.

In summary, the factors that are putting communication on the development map include:

- ▶ failed or mediocre field implementation experiences;
- ▶ increased accountability and transparency;
- ▶ interaction and consultation processes within and among organizations; and
- ▶ environmental change and epidemics that affect large parts of the globe.

Regardless of the factors that stimulate change, those organizations that are able to embrace change will be doing so by innovating (experimentation, lateral thinking, creativity). It is in these kinds of innovative environments that effective communication is most likely to occur.

<sup>5</sup> Fraser, 1996.

# Soul City

is a South African health promotion project that harnesses the power of mass media for social change. The doctor who founded Soul City wanted to use mass media to prevent the spread of HIV and promote a healthier lifestyle. Soul City's programs are "edutainment," (education plus entertainment), an enriched version of traditional TV, radio and print. They are popular, designed and produced to air in prime time (rather than in less viewed education time spots), and have become some of the most listened-to programs in South Africa. About two million people watch the show every week. Most of the story lines have focused on HIV/AIDS.

Nine radio stations throughout the country receive the TV manuscript, and rewrite a radio script departing from what was on TV. Once the radio script is done, each station produces its own continuation of the TV story line in its own language.

Soul City uses print media to reinforce the broadcast messages. The booklets are serialized in two languages and published in ten newspapers nationally.

Public relations and advertising have a dual role – to popularize the television and radio shows and to advocate for particular health issues. Soul City is increasingly focusing on media advocacy for healthy public policy, recognizing that communication strategies for meaningful social change cannot focus attention solely on individuals. The numerous structural and environmental barriers in the way of individuals advocating for healthy public policy make Soul City's advocacy role increasingly important one.

Many evaluations have been integrated into the work of the project. Some include: a national survey with baseline (pre-intervention) and evaluation (post-intervention) measures of 2000 respondents for each survey; a national qualitative impact assessment; an evaluation of the partnership between Soul City and the National Network on Violence Against Women (NNVAW); and a cost-effectiveness study.

Data showed that Soul City contributed to the changing discourse on, and prioritization of domestic violence within National Government. The programs succeeded in putting pressure on government to speed up the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act. The Partnership Evaluation found that the implementation of the Act in 1999 was an achievement largely attributed to the advocacy initiative of the partnership between Soul City and NNVAW and the multi-media component of the Soul City initiative.

Significantly, communities began to shift from silent collusion with domestic violence to active opposition to it. There are anecdotal reports of pot or bottle banging. For example, patrons at a local pub in Thembisa collectively banged bottles upon witnessing a man physically abusing his girlfriend.

Soul City impacted positively on women's self-worth and sense of identity, in the context of rights-awareness and "new" options. Soul City empowered women to negotiate relationships and (safer) sex. Women interviewed report that Soul City encouraged them to act on this new awareness of their rights in oppressive or abusive contexts, or in contexts traditionally associated with unequal gender power relations.

**In the Sahel**, water is scarce and its management is critical to sustaining rural communities.

However, practices in which poor rural communities are seen as beneficiaries, and where decisions are taken from the outside by government managers or international organizations representatives often lead to non sustainable results and the aggravation of poverty. On the other hand, when communities are actively involved and empowered, and other stakeholders brought to a discussion table with the communities, we can see impressive change. This has been demonstrated while addressing water related conflicts.

An IDRC supported action-research project experimented a Participatory Communication Approach to address water related conflicts with local communities. The research team worked with 19 villages in the Nakanbe River Basin in Burkina Faso. The team and the communities identified three main sources of water related conflicts: the lack or insufficiency of water; deficient management and use of existing water infrastructures; and the lack of communication between end-users.

They also identified causes and types of problems associated with these conflicts. Conflicts between different users (women, little girls, gardeners, merchants, pastoralists, etc.) competing at the water pump were the most common. Ethnic issues also played a role in these conflicts. Members from minority ethnic groups in a community would not have easy use of scarce water resources. Other issues such as ancestral beliefs and taboos, water collection by populations from other villages and the prevalence of diseases related to water were also identified and discussed.

Actions to address these problems fell into three distinct categories. Some of the proposed solutions were of a technical nature. Others aimed at understanding and influencing mentalities, behaviours and taboos. The third category pointed to the organization or restructuring of Water Management Committees.



## Water is Life Addressing Water Related Conflicts in the Sahel

A consensus-building and decision-making process was then activated and supported by way of a participatory communication strategy. Such a strategy began with the discussion around problems and proposed solutions and flows with the following actions: identifying specific groups in the community and other stakeholders in relation with the problems identified; analyzing communication needs and identifying objectives; developing communication activities and selecting communication tools; implementing, monitoring and evaluating activities and their contribution to the established goal.

In each local community, specific groups of women, young girls, pastoralists, community leaders, members of water management committees and members of different ethnic groups participated in the discussions. Other stakeholders identified outside the communities, such as administrative and political authorities, government managers, development partners and donors were also associated with these discussions.

Activities involved: community meetings, informal group discussions, a roundtable involving all stakeholders (community mem-

bers, development partners, managers and decision-makers), training of community agents and of water management committee members, theatre, radio transmissions, video projections, organization of forum discussions on the management of water committees, organization of exchange travels between villages, council meetings (Village, Departmental and Regional levels), and elective village assemblies for the election of water management committee members.

These activities supported the process of change at the community level and introduced consultations with decision-makers at the regional and national level that are still on-going.

As a result, communities' capacities in organizing themselves to better manage their water, resolving conflict issues and linking with decision-makers were reinforced. Specific outputs included the following: community participation to the rehabilitation of hand-pumps and installations, funds collected in communities and demands addressed to the national water program to assist in the digging of other wells, strengthening of community organizations, improvement of dialogue and collaborative action between different ethnic groups, organizations or restructuring of water management committees, massive involvement of women in these committees, reduction of water-related diseases in the communities, involvement of local, regional and national decision-makers and managers in the search for solutions.

The research emphasised the role of participatory communication in addressing development issues. It also showed the importance of facilitating and reinforcing stakeholder participation in decision-making processes. Finally it also showed that given a dynamic of collective involvement and collaborative action, people can fight poverty and find solutions to their problems.

*This project was supported by the International Development Research Centre and by a team of CEDRES, University of Ouagadougou, O-led by Niombi Kibi.*

# Innovation: Priming the Demand for Communication

# 3

***The error to which the concept of extension can lead is clear. It is one of "extending" technical knowledge to the peasants, instead of making (by efficient communication) the concrete fact to which the knowledge refers (expressed by linguistic signs) the object of the mutual comprehension of peasants and agronomists alike. It is only with the co-participation of the peasants that communication can work efficiently, and only by means of this communication can agronomists successfully carry out their work.***

Paolo Freire, 1973. *¿Extensión o Comunicación?*

All areas of development work (natural resource management, environment, health, water and sanitation...) now call for participation. Take the example of collaborative management (CM), a process that engages stakeholders in agreeing on how to manage a resource.

*Collaborative management begins with stakeholder analysis and participatory appraisal activities, followed by a series of negotiation and planning meetings to reach a basic consensus. Agreed language (concepts, frames of reference, points of departure) is essential to bridge differences and find perspectives. This process may require extensive negotiation using a variety of planning tools. Finally the agreement is applied through the necessary institutional arrangements, and tested to gather system feedback and adjust the strategies and procedures. Being in a position to play a role depends on the actors' power to become involved, to be heard and seen; on their readiness to learn; and on legal, political, institutional, economic and socio-cultural questions of feasibility (Borrini-Feyerabend, 1996: 34-35).*

Communication thus becomes central to the negotiation process, but it is not a silver bullet. The above reference to collaborative management shows that other indispensable ingredients must be brought into play: reduced power differences, a procedure of engagement that all parties perceive as fair, a convener who is trusted by all par-

ties, methods of negotiation, and **institutional and policy commitment to consultation and learning**. Without the latter, it is unlikely that a communication component will ever thrive.

One of the innovative aspects of the approach emphasizes that the participation and leadership of local people is essential to co-management. In other words, innovation must be built on existing local knowledge and practice, rather than imposed from outside.

If we ask ourselves how to actually do that, we come to realize that new methodologies and processes must be found for:

- ▶ resource planning with the engagement of multiple stakeholders;
- ▶ accessing local knowledge and information;
- ▶ co-management and ongoing adaptation; and
- ▶ policy interaction between local communities and various levels of government.

Co-management requires a move away from telling people what to do or extracting information to a more sharing and participatory approach that emphasizes interaction between groups.

Experience shows that:

- ▶ Doing this is not simple; in fact it can often lead to conflict;
- ▶ None of this can be done without communication.

The Mexican and Tanzanian examples, and the Canadian one below, are similar in that managers have realized the importance of communication. They differ in that communication was used to address different natural resource management needs. **In Mexico**, communication activities were about engaging communities in the planning and training process. **In Tanzania** the intervention

focused on communicating a change in policy and making new procedures relevant to many stakeholders. **In the Canadian** example we see yet another type of communication intervention: one where power differences needed attention before the different stakeholders could agree to collaborate. These different experiences fall under the umbrella of 'communication for development'.

## THE KAMINURIK HERD<sup>1</sup>

**A classic tale of cultural, social and economic disagreement between traditional users of resources and government officials**

For centuries, caribou have provided several groups of Inuit in the Canadian Arctic with food, clothing and shelter. But the caribou hunt has been of more than merely material significance to the Inuit. Success as a hunter has meant recognition as a man. Indeed, the caribou have become central to the Inuit's cultural identity.

A potentially serious threat to that identity emerged in the 1970s, as extensive mining exploration began in the Keewatin District of the North West Territories, bringing with it people, equipment, aircraft and noise. The Inuit became alarmed that the noise was driving the caribou from their traditional feeding areas. The miners thought otherwise. So, for the most part, did biologists from southern Canada, who had been monitoring the state of the herd for two decades, without, however, reporting their findings to the Inuit in non-technical language they could understand.

Public hearings took place, with the Inuit filing lawsuits seeking to stop the mining. While the hearings did result in some restrictions on mining activity, information given by the biologists also led the government to impose strict quotas on the hunting of the Kaminuriak herd. Tensions quickly rose, and an angry impasse was soon reached, with an Inuit leader declaring a state of war between his people and the biologists and game wardens and calling on the Inuit to defy the new hunting quotas.

A concerned government official called in Donald Snowden, who had pioneered the use of portable video as a tool to improve communication among conflicting groups. Snowden proposed that each group be videotaped in its own domain and that each be able to express itself fully in its own language. He also proposed that every tape produced be made available to all groups, and that editing rights be vested solely in those appearing on tape – not in Inuit organizations nor with senior government officials.

Two production crews were assembled – one Inuit and one non-Inuit – and provided with appropriate training. Spokespeople were selected from each of the Inuit communities, and four biologists were chosen to speak on behalf of the scientific community. Following production, all videotapes were translated into the second language for playback. The tapes were then collected and played

back to separate discussion groups of Inuit and government officials. Each group could hear the tapes in its own language.

So rich was the material on the tapes that they were taken back to the communities for screening and discussion. People met in homes, schools, and community halls and at social gatherings to watch, learn, and comment. The experience of viewing the tapes led to major changes in attitude, with the Inuit expressing a willingness to work together with government to resolve the problems of the Kaminuriak herd. Likewise, biologists who viewed the tapes were so impressed by the extent of the Inuit's knowledge that they too felt the two groups could work together.

Inuit leaders rejected the government's invitation to sit on its existing committee. Instead, they formed their own committee and invited government to sit with them. Realizing that an important turning point had been reached in the debate, government soon accepted. Today, more than twenty years after that first initiative, the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq (Kaminuriak) Caribou Management Board is still operational. Its website's ([www.arctic-caribou.com](http://www.arctic-caribou.com)) opening note is a testament to the spirit of cooperation established at that time.

*"Welcome to the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board, a group of hunters, biologists and wildlife managers working together to conserve Canada's vast Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou herds for the welfare of traditional caribou-using communities and others."*

The videotape project alone did not bring about these changes. Native people and unusual civil servants dedicated to finding a way around the Kaminuriak crisis were at the root of the changes that occurred. But the communication project was of identifiable assistance, for it helped in replacing emotion with logic, speaking with listening, rhetoric with considered thinking, and ignorance and lack of concern with understanding and care. In the process, both sides retained their sense of dignity; nobody lost and everybody was a winner. *Don Snowden, 1984.*

# Beyond Improvisation: Planning Communication

# 4

*The only way we can work for a common cause, for common interest, to improve our condition, is really through communication. Basically, it has to do with democracy, with participation, with spreading of knowledge and insight and ability to take care of our own future. Gro Brundtland*

**S**trategic Communication, Development Communication or Communication for Development are the words that communication professionals use to indicate **planned** communication strategies that are applied to development programmes or projects.

Your organization may be using different titles for the same concept:

- ▶ Social mobilization
- ▶ Participatory approaches
- ▶ Management plans
- ▶ Change management

## Communication Functions

When we talk about Communication, we are referring to a planned communication approach that can support a range of programme implementation needs through several complementary functions.

We stress the word **planned** to emphasize the importance of being proactive in plotting out carefully constructed communication inputs to enhance program/project implementation.

There is a wide range of communication functions that cross the development spectrum – information, public relations, social marketing, community voice and so on.

For the purpose of this paper we focus on three major communication functions:



FAO, Madagascar, 1994

### 1. Making policies known and relevant

Increasingly there is a trend towards interactive policy-making. This move away from a persuasive advertising approach demands careful communication planning – for public meetings, consultations, and round tables for stakeholder engagement.

### 2. Communication for sharing knowledge

Explaining scientific information with the aim of creating new perspectives rather than transferring pre-packaged solutions.

### 3. Participatory communication

Giving a voice to different stakeholders to engage in platforms where negotiation among different parties can take place with regard to natural resources.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> These categories are adapted from the original source: Rolling, N., 1994.

These communication functions have emerged from decades of applied work in development; that is why they fit rather nicely with the new development challenges listed in the box below:

Development challenges (from page 6)	Communication Functions
Nature is too complex to be controlled – we aim to manage change; hence the emphasis on collaborative management approaches;	Participatory communication
We integrate local and external knowledge and expertise; interdisciplinary thinking is a must;	Communication for sharing knowledge
We need to engage many stakeholders and negotiate ways forward – hence the popularity of community participation;	Participatory communication
Global forces have direct impact at all levels (privatization, liberalization, trade agreements, global warming, etc.), hence the need to engage partners at all levels;	Participatory communication
Private-public partnerships and demand-based approaches are the norm, hence the importance of making the rules relevant and applying negotiation skills;	Making policies known and relevant
The growing spread of these tools puts pressure on NRM managers to be accountable – hence the importance of harnessing the tools.	All three functions

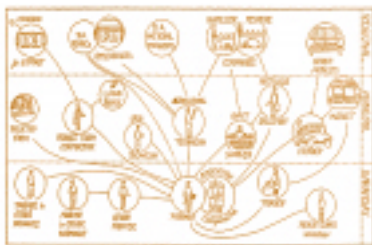
Planning should be done at the outset of any program or project design. This makes it possible for planners to set aside time and budget for the communication activities. Communication strategies that are brought in after a program has run into roadblocks are far more difficult to manage.

## Communication Planning

If, in designing any program or project, we leave out an essential communication plan and assume that communication will take place naturally, we will be missing one of the most important opportunities to ensure that true communication actually does take place.

There are several steps in the planning process:

- Communication mapping to identify areas where planned communication inputs will help;
- Identification of key communication issues and their functions;
- Identification of different stakeholder (audience) groups involved, and of the channels of communication they utilize and trust;
- Research with stakeholder groups to gain understanding of how the issue impacts on the group (and how "each" group best manages communication); and
- Matching communication functions to methodologies.



Challenge map prepared with the farmers of Surangay, Marikina, Region IV in the Philippines

FAO. 1995. Understanding farmers' communication networks. Communication for Development Case Study no 14, Rome.

# Matching Communication Functions, Approaches and Tools

# 5

***There is no recipe or model for a participatory process or a participatory communication approach. Approaches will vary according to different geographic conditions, societies, cultures and environmental conditions.*** Silvia Balit<sup>8</sup>

**W**e have established that there are several Communication Functions. In addition, there are communication **approaches** (or methodologies) and communication **tools**.



Photo by Ricardo Ramirez, Uganda, 2003.

Many of the more common communication approaches stem from the field of health communication. Agricultural extension has adapted some of these approaches to disseminate technology to farmers, with mixed results.

The point is that different approaches are used to facilitate different functions. For example, the policy function is often approached through public meetings, consultations, and public forums. This function can also be approached through campaigns, social marketing, and advertising. Sometimes the same approach can be adapted for dif-

ferent functions. For example, radio can be used to convey information but can also be used as a platform for dialogue and discussion.

When we talk about **tools** we include a wide variety of media: posters, pamphlets, radio, televisions, drama, songs, public meetings, e-mail, electronic file exchanges, and Internet websites.

## **FUNCTION** Making Policies Known and Relevant

The **approaches** used to articulate this communication function are the most generic. They can include information promotion and media advocacy, and are often programmed into campaigns that combine public forums, consultations, and round tables.

## **FUNCTION** Communication for Sharing Knowledge

The approaches used to articulate this communication function can include information – education and communication (IEC), social marketing, and media campaigns.

Many of the ideas for this communication function originally came from the health communication field. The work is usually centered on the need to bring about some form of behavioral change (mothers immunizing their children, pro-

<sup>8</sup> Former Chief of the Communication for Development Group, FAO, Rome.



moting the use of condoms and so on). The large amount of innovative work around HIV/AIDS has contributed greatly to new ideas and applications for this area of communication approach. These methodologies have been adapted for a wider use in a variety of applications. The community audio tower experience in the Philippines is one example of a communication campaign where the impact was measured in terms of change awareness about agricultural technologies, knowledge and adoption. A key to the success was the involvement of farmers in all stages of the process.

## FUNCTION Participatory Communication

The approaches used to articulate this communication function are varied. They can include: participatory appraisal; multi-stakeholder consultations; collaborative learning; collaborative management; and rights-based communication.

Participatory communication gets at the root of development. It is a methodology that can facilitate people's inclusion in decision-making, access people's voices, and expose many of the power issues inherent in under-development. The Fogo Island example on the next page is a well-known case of participatory communication.

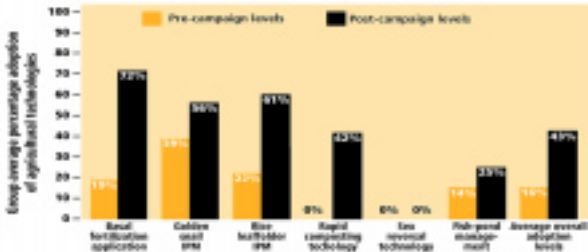
### Multi-media Campaign Propels Record Rice Harvest in the Philippines<sup>9</sup>

The community of Tulungatung in Southwestern Mindanao is classified as an agriculturally depressed area. Prior to a multi-media agricultural communication campaign, the average rice yields were 46 cavans/ha. (44kgs/cavan), compared with the 77 cavans/ha. in the surrounding Ayala District. In preparation for the communication campaign, farmers were involved in rural appraisals about their farming system. As part of this analysis, they defined the agricultural technologies that they felt were most urgently needed. They also determined what media they wanted to use and the times and places when they could get together and learn. The communities planned how to set up a community-owned and operated audio tower system, which was the main media used in the campaign.

The 1993 communication campaign covered an area with 94 hectares of rice. It included a four-month "School on the Air" with three broadcasts per week using the community audio towers. Print-support materials accompanied the airing along with field demonstrations.

Knowledge level scores among the rice farmers on the technologies rose from an average of 55% prior to the campaign to 92% following it. Adoption of technologies increased from 46% to 68%; adoption was high when the technologies promoted were low-cost and simple. There was an "informed non-adoption" of those technologies that turned out to be unreliable or difficult, as was the case with sex reversal technology for tilapia fish farming.

The rice yield increases for the wet season in 1992 were 43 cavans/ha., whereas after the campaign the 1994 wet season yields more than doubled to 90 cavans/ha. Translated into monetary terms, at the selling rate of 3.5 pesos/kg, the wet season harvest increase amounted to Ps 7,238/ha (US\$290). Project implementers pointed out that the yield increases were due to the adoption of low-cost practices, especially those related to integrated pest management. Of equal significance to the yield increases is the fact that the community radio tower system remains community, owned and operational ten years later.



# Fogo Island

Feedback to Decision-Makers

An innovative Use of Film

In the late 1960s, the Premier of Newfoundland (Canada), Joey Smallwood, decided to move the people from Fogo Island to the mainland. The fishing industry, the main source of income for the islanders, had run dry. Smallwood felt that moving the people off Fogo was the only thing to do to save the islanders. This decision was made without any consultation with the islanders.

The National Film Board (NFB) of Canada decided to choose this time to come to Newfoundland to film a series on poverty in Canada. To do this, the NFB joined with the Extension Department of Newfoundland's Memorial University to make a documentary film on the lives of the islanders. For reasons that he later found difficult to explain, the filmmaker (Colin Low) decided to shoot "one-on-one" films which allowed plenty of time for individuals to tell the full story of their lives on the island. At the end of the shoot, Low found that the individual tapes had an

incredible power as stand-alone pieces. He was reluctant to edit them into the usual documentary form. But what, he wondered, could be done with these long, individual life stories?

A group of filmmakers, Memorial University personnel, and journalists met in Montreal to try to decide what to do with the films. After long discussion, someone suggested that the films be shown to Joey Smallwood and his Cabinet. The Chancellor of Memorial University tried to veto this idea, fearing political repercussions from the controversial nature of the material. Nevertheless, those in favour won the day and a series of the films were screened for the Newfoundland Cabinet in 1972. So powerful was the impact of the Fogo voice to the Cabinet that the Fisheries Minister, Aiden Powell, asked to go on film to explain the government's reasons for evacuation to the people of Fogo. The film carrying Mr. Powell's address to Fogo was taken to the island and shown to

the people. A series of film discussions took place culminating in a joint decision. The Fogo Islanders were allowed to remain in their birthplace and the government assisted in the search for alternative industry. To this day, the Fogo Islanders remain on the island.

This was the beginning of what is now widely known as "the Fogo Process." Film was used as a vehicle to transfer ideas back and forth between disparate groups, enabling a form of discussion that could never take place in a 'face-to-face' situation. Film later gave way to video (see Kaminiiriak) and began to be used as a vehicle for planning, conflict resolution and discussion all over the world. In Mexico, a communication practitioner heard about Fogo and adapted the idea in over 20 projects in his region. Today, the hand-held video camera is widely used as a development communication tool all over the world.

**The shift from the old to the new development approach is also evident in that the participatory communication function is gaining prominence.** This is the area of greatest focus now for development practitioners and managers. In the past there was more emphasis on the first two (more uni-directional) communication approaches. While these approaches remain important, the more participatory approaches to communication we have been discussing here are generally better-suited to meeting today's development challenges.<sup>10</sup>

## Institutions have affinities for different communication functions.

In the Proderith example discussed earlier, the Mexican government and the World Bank began using video to facilitate the participatory approach to access farmer's voice in irrigation planning. During the years following the donor's departure, however, the government gradually turned away from participatory communication-focusing instead on producing information packages for technology transfer. This is not really surprising. Most governments are comfortable with the communication functions related to policy and information. Participatory communication is different and best facilitated through intermediaries or third parties (such

as NGOs or private consultants) as opposed to government functionaries.

Communication strategies in support of programmes will often borrow elements from several of the communication functions. Each project context will require a different mix of communication functions and approaches; giving each mix a methodological 'label' will become increasingly difficult in that each combination will reflect a local adaptation as an integration of disciplines and stakeholders. It is clear that this is a fertile ground for innovation.

In planning a communication strategy, it is important to understand and acknowledge that different institutions are comfortable with different types of communication interventions. As noted, it is not always practical to try and get a government body to implement a participatory process. It may, however, be useful to help government develop their awareness programs and to encourage government to work with intermediary groups (NGOs) to implement the participatory approaches.

<sup>9</sup> Coldevin, G. 1995. *Farmer-first approaches to communication: A case study from the Philippines*. FAO: Rome.

<sup>10</sup> The publication listed at this end of this paper by Coldevin and FAO is an excellent example of this shift.



# Communication: Driving Innovation in Organizations

# 6

**Whether the [Millennium] Goals succeed partly depends on the local political environment - on whether there are avenues for citizens to participate in decision making through formal democratic structures or through direct collective mobilization and action.** UNDP Human Development Report 2003, p. 134

**W**hat is it that allows some organizations to build development communication into their organizational structure while others seem indifferent to the idea?

We asked this question when interviewing various institutional "decision-makers" in preparation for this paper. We learned that:

- ▶ Most organizations value communication in one form or another, particularly in its role as outreach or public relations – external communication.
- ▶ Many value the role that communication can play for internal issues such as knowledge management and internal policy development.
- ▶ Some value the growing role of information, communication technologies (ICT) though they often mistake the tool for the programme:
- ▶ A small, but growing, group of organizations, has acknowledged the supporting role of communication in programme development and implementation. Some have had communication units within their organizations for at least a decade (UNICEF, FAO, UNFPA, UNESCO); others are now in the process of building communication units into their organizational structures (DANIDA, DFID and SIDA).

**What brought this about?**

DANIDA recognized the large amount of attention that was paid to its own organizational need for communication (public relations and relationship with Danish taxpayers). This demonstration of the importance of communication to the organ-



ization opened the door to decision-makers' realization that communication would also be important for the implementation of the DANIDA Partnership 2000 strategy.

DFID came at it differently. They began with a discussion group on ICTs, which led to an ICT Think Study in 2000. However, work in this area was fragmented into different sectors (Health, Agriculture, Infrastructure etc.) and was not generally given a high priority within these departments. DFID next undertook a major reorganization leading to the development of policy teams. This time, a new Director of Information post was established and the newly recruited Director recognized the importance of delivering the Millennium Development Goals. He championed the work put forward by the policy group, bringing this group and its agenda into DFID's Information Division and establishing a significant programme budget for its operation. The unit is called the Information and Communication for Development Team (ICD). This group is now developing a strategy, and its programme

## Consider a Project Experience from Kenya:

is likely to combine information and communication to support programme implementation. It will aim to develop evidence-based policy in the area of Information and Communication for Development (ICD), provide advice to DFID's country programmes, and act as an advocacy group within the international system for ICD teams advocating for the poor.

The DFID ICT Think Study recognized that ICTs, while important, are not a panacea. Rather, they are tools that need to be put to work and fully integrated into Poverty Reduction Strategies to respond to the type of communication needs addressed in this paper. Infrastructure, access and use are still limited in developing areas.

*Traditional media are still important, and a mix of the two media will probably yield the best results. (Balit)*

The project realized that poor urban women, apart from needing information for their development activities, also need to feed back into policy by way of communicating their development needs and requirements to policy-makers at the top. The project strove to create a two-way information flow system between poor urban women on the one hand and policy makers on the other.

The pilot phase of the project involved the production of an interactive video by the women. The video was aimed at preserving their spoken words and addressing policy-makers on issues of importance to them. The project also undertook a literature survey assessing the relevance of ICTs in strengthen-

Collaborative fishery management workshop, Chile, 2002.



ing poor urban women's participation and knowledge and identifying methods for reducing the barriers women experience when accessing information.

Among the project's most important outputs are two fifteen-minute videos produced by women from Mathare and Redemeed villages and a third video clearly showing the process. Another is the literature search to access the relevance of ICTs in strengthening poor urban women's participation and knowledge and methods for reducing the barriers women experience when accessing ICTs.

One of the project's most important long-term impacts has been the development of the women's ability to utilize and appreciate more information and communications technologies. The women have gained a new skill that they are putting to very good use. They have been actively involved in the documentation of their activities and participation in key events such as the Women's Day celebrations in 2001 and 2002, World AIDS (2001) Day and several documentaries. Using the video, they want to ensure that accurate information gets to everyone on what is going on in the informal settlements. They appreciate their new, more powerful role in society. In cases of unrest, they are often conferred with and even called upon to offer advice.

<http://www.cto-ict.org>

The case study is significant in many ways:

- 1 Women were given focal attention as a sector of the population that is less powerful (**gender dimension**).
- 2 The women had power over the media; they controlled the tools; they controlled the message; they began accessing information (**power dimension**).
- 3 Video materials were produced, and they were seen as intermediary products to empower women, provide them with skills and pride, get their message out, and get them engaged in public events (**media products as intermediary products leading to people's accomplishments**).
- 4 Simple group media remain relevant and can be treated as another ICT (**ICTs are not just computers and Internet**).
- 5 The project embraced the three communication functions: influencing policy-making, informing people about HIV/AIDS, and putting communication tools into the hands of the users (**integration of communication functions**).
- 6 The content of the video was of priority to the women (**HIV/AIDS**).
- 7 A third video was produced to show the process of producing the videos (**organizational learning**).
- 8 Community media served as a tool for empowerment, giving the poor a chance to speak and be heard as opposed to relying on mainstream media (**ownership over the media**).

**Are any of these eight significant issues NOT relevant to a host of development management challenges?**

**While we acknowledge that the question is rhetorical, we want to highlight the difficulty organizations encounter when trying to change rhetoric to practice.**

The Development Bank of Southern Africa, for example, readily accepts that participation and participatory communication are integral elements of the development process. The problem, they admit, is that they have not figured out how to change their corporate structure to meet the challenges posed by participation.

Organizational mission statements and brochures often espouse the importance of participation but fail dismally in the implementation. Budget shortfalls, unrealistic time-frames and the need to disburse funds quickly can all be serious obstacles to the creation of an enabling environment for participative development. More often than not, the pre-programmed expectations of the donor-agency pre-ordain the focus, scope, timing and budget of the so-called participatory project.

There are some examples, however, where communication approaches have been used to facilitate open discussion, needs analysis and program identification by the “host” country without surrender to a donor-imposed agenda. The instances are rare but could point the way to future practice offering potential for sustainability.

## Communication as catalyst

So far, we have been talking about communication as a support to development programmes and challenges. Sometimes communication approaches are being used to stimulate discussion and debate around development issues unrelated to programme implementation. Recently in the Central Asian Republics, the World Bank has instigated a range of studies, dialogues and consultations around various themes confronting the area. Government, civil society and communities have been brought together to assess issues of HIV/AIDS, governance, income support and so on. Other studies from countries with a similar context have been used to help participants understand the issues and learn how others have confronted the problem. These discussion groups have acted as a catalyst to help affected groups search for solutions for their own development challenges.



Photo by  
Ricardo Ramirez,  
Uganda, 2003.

This paper advocates that Development needs innovation

- Innovation** is the right medium for communication
- Effective development** needs planned communication inputs
- Communication** has different functions
- Communication action** needs to be research-based and planned
- Development initiatives** can be shaped by communication interventions
- Engaging stakeholders** at the start can influence the design of a process.

In order to embrace these opportunities, organizations need to articulate policies to embrace communication

- Train** staff in communication planning skills
- Modify** budget allocation procedures to include communication planning and implementation
- Build** flexibility into programming
- Integrate** communication into project cycles.

## Communication and Participation – Two Sides of the Same Coin

Part of the definition of Development Communication states that "communication and participation are two sides of the same coin". In essence, what we are saying is that there cannot be participation without some form of communication. To be effective, communication needs to be a planned and researched activity to complement any development initiative be it program or project. As development specialist Erskine Childers has noted:

***If you want development to be rooted in the human beings who have to become the agents of it as well as the beneficiaries – who will alone decide on the kind of development that they can sustain after the foreign aid has gone away – then you have got to communicate with them... if you don't do that you will continue to have weak or failing development programs. It's as simple as that.***

*Erskine Childers, UN analyst and Communication for Development specialist.  
Source: FAO Video, "Sharing Knowledge," 1991.*



# Recommended Reading

Readers interested in more information are referred to the FAO/IDRC Guidelines on Communication for Development that complement this publication.

Bessette, G. 2003. *From information dissemination to community participation. A facilitator's guide to participatory development communication*. Penang: Southbound, and Ottawa: IDRC.

Borrini-Feyerabend, G.; 1996. *Collaborative management of protected areas: Tailoring the approach to the context*. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN.

Coldevin, G. & FAO, 2003. \* *Participatory Communication: A Key to Rural Learning Systems\**. Rome: FAO.

FAO. 1992. *Sharing knowledge: Communication for sustainable development*. VHS Video. Rome: FAO.

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Fraser, C. and Restrepo-Estrada, S. 1998. *Communicating for development: Human change for survival*. London and New York: I.B. Taurus Publishers.

Fraser, C. 1996. *Communication for rural development in Mexico – in good times and in bad*. Rome: FAO.

Gumucio-Dagrón, A. (ed). 2001. *Making waves*. Washington: Rockefeller Foundation.

Röling, N.G. 1994. Communication support for sustainable natural resource management. Special issue: Knowledge is power? The use and abuse of information in development. *IDS Bulletin* 25 (2): 125-133.

White, S.A. (ed). 2003. *Participatory Video: Images that Transform and Empower*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

## Recommended Websites:

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DevMedia: Media for development and democracy [[www.devmedia.org](http://www.devmedia.org)]

FAO Communication for Development [[www.fao.org/sd/KN1\\_en.htm](http://www.fao.org/sd/KN1_en.htm)]

The Communication Initiative [[www.comminit.com](http://www.comminit.com)]

## Training Programmes:

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Malmö University, Sweden [<http://www.k3.mah.se/ComDev/index.htm>]

Isang Bagsak: *A distance learning and networking program in participatory development communication* [<http://www.isangbagsak.org/pages/intro.html>]

University of the Philippines at Los Baños [<http://www.uplb.edu.ph/academics/schools/gsd/devcom.html>]